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The Damned Confederate Flag:

The Development of an American Symbol,

1865-1995

by

Scott Marsden ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History

Department of History and Classics

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Abstract

The aims of this thesis are to describe the changes in symbolism Confederate flags have undergone in the decades since the end of the American Civil War, with relation to the contemporary social and political events which caused them; to describe the two major controversies which have arisen in this time frame; and to analyze the present debate with relation to these prior factors.

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Introduction:

The Nature of Symbols

Karl Marx once said that the Confederate States of America was "not a country at all, but a battle slogan."[1] It should come as no surprise, then, that the Confederacy is most often associated with its military leaders and its battle flag. Other items, such as its political affairs, its social makeup, and its exact reasons for coming into existence are often passed over by the eye of popular history. Nonetheless, in the century and more which has passed since the Civil War, it is the flag which has transcended its purely historical nature to become a symbol of a variety of feelings and opinions, to be described in the chapters that follow. Before the topic in general can be entered into, however, some words must first be said about the nature of symbols, and how they relate to the subject at hand.

A symbol, basically defined, is something which represents something else. This tie is implicit in the origin of the word, the Greek verb *symbollein*. In Ancient Greece, contracts were often finalized with the breaking of an object, such as a tablet or piece of pottery. The two parties then took a piece. When one party wanted the contract honored, the two parts were fitted together; an act which identified the holders of the contract and verified the existence of the contract itself. The two pieces were called *symbola* and the act of matching was *symbollein*. A "symbol", then, came to mean something used for the

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[1] Quoted in Hodding Carter, "The South and the World: A Dissenting Postscript," in John B. Boles, ed., *Dixie Dateline: A Journalistic Portrayal of the Contemporary South* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1983).

purposes of mutual recognition, and with an understood meaning.[2] At the social level, symbols play important roles. Sociologist Robert Morrison MacIver says that a symbol "is at once a definite focus of interest, a means of communication and a common ground of understanding . . . All communication, whether through language or other means, makes use of symbols. Society could scarcely exist without them."[3] Symbols give an identifiable form to society's abstract concepts, thereby allowing a greater degree of immediate personal association with such ideas. Most citizens of modern nations, for instance, would be hard pressed to explain how their national treasury systems work, but almost all of them have some grasp of the spending power of their national currency. Intrinsically, many currencies are worth nothing; their usability comes from the symbolic tie the physical money has to the concept of a nation's wealth, as well as the acceptance the general population gives to this tie.

Complications arise because of an important characteristic of symbols—their variable nature. If one were to make a diagram of a symbolic representation, one might place the symbol between the object it represents and the subject to whom the symbol conveys its message.[4] This diagram, however, involves only one subject; different subjects may well view the symbol in different ways. A "sex symbol," for instance, is generally recognized as a person who possesses either a body or mannerisms which

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[2] Sven Tito Achen, *Symbols Around Us* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1978), 8; Frederick W. Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 14.

[3] Robert Morrison MacIver, *Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 340; quoted in Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols*, 7.

[4] William F. Lynch, "The Evocative Symbol," in *Symbols and Society: Fourteenth Symposium of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion*, eds. Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, Hudson Hogard and R.M. MacIver (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1964), 428.

produce sexual arousal. This type of symbolism is very subjective. Would the same person who agrees when society calls a certain young female a "sex symbol" necessarily concur when some members of the same society view an older male in the same way?[5] Thus, the symbol does not necessarily mean the same thing to all observers. Furthermore, the object of the symbol may not be viewed in the same way by all possible subjects. In 1969, for instance, when the Indian Congress Party split into two factions, both groups wanted to use the party's old emblem of two yoked bullocks. Legal action was even initiated, although in the end both sides were denied use of the emblem. This example raises the question of what the emblem would have meant to voters: would they have connected the "yoked bullocks" emblem with the Congress Party, even though it no longer existed in its original form; would they have associated the emblem with a party which held the same ideals as the old Congress Party; or would they have supported the bearers of that emblem simply because it was a pleasing icon?[6] In this case, the symbol is generally recognized—it is the object the symbol represents which is in dispute.

National flags are among the most cogent symbols of a country. The attachment to them has as much to do with their use and placement as it has with what they symbolize. Flags are often used in ceremonial occasions of a patriotic and emotional nature and can be found overlooking important places of government and society.[7] They are also intrinsically connected to war. Thomas Carlyle noted that he knew of "500 living

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[5] Raymond Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 21.

[6] Ibid., 23-4.

[7] Theodore M. Greene, "The Symbolic Vehicles of Our Cultural Values," chap. in *Symbols and Society* eds. Lyman Bryson, et. al. (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1964), 232.

soldiers sabred into crows' meat, for a piece of glazed cotton which they called their *Flag*, which, had you sold it at any market-cross, would not have brought above three *groschen*."[8] Such a connection brings even more attachments to the flag as a symbol, such as those of bravery and honor, and the powerful image of blood being shed for the ideals of a country and its citizens.[9] Due to the powerful associations flags carry, it is not surprising to see them acting as manifestations of the nations they represent. Many countries have established laws dictating how flags can be carried, flown, and stored, as well as harsh punishments for their desecration. Among the citizens of such nations, the flag, the country, and the people are inseparable. To insult one is to insult the others. Thus, the desecration of flags, or even a perceived insult or slight against them, is seen as a grievous affront to a nation's dignity.

Like symbols generally, flags can be viewed in different ways, depending on the observer. One of the best examples of such variation is provided by the assorted flags of the Confederate States of America. These emblems provide an interesting study because what they refer to symbolically has been regarded differently by several groups during the decades that have elapsed since the end of the Confederacy in 1865. Indeed, with regard to their symbolic interpretations, Confederate flags are interesting because both the symbol and the object of the symbol have been viewed variously. Since 1865, some people have seen the flags as symbols of the Confederacy, the South, rebellion in general, or white supremacy. Others have viewed them as just another element in the pantheon of

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[8] Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private*, 339.

[9] Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols*, 68-9.

American popular culture, and have refused to add any additional meaning. Furthermore, even those who see the flag as being distinctly Confederate disagree among themselves on the flag's meaning depending upon their interpretation of what the Confederacy symbolized; some point to the military honor of the Confederate military and revere the flag; others have seen the Confederacy as a seditious institution and have reviled the flag accordingly; while still others have pointed to the Confederacy's slaveholding nature and, therefore, say that Confederate flags are emblems of racism.

Despite the many different views Confederate flags have produced, the historical reasons for these views, and the continuance of debate on the subject in the present, analysis of flags has yet to move beyond the specific or the superficial, with most of what little there has been published being dedicated to the events of the post-World War II era. This is curious, as not only does the flag debate have strong ties to many facets of American history, including the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, and the African-American experience; it also is a phenomenon which has lasted from the end of the Civil War until the present day. The object of this thesis is thus threefold: to describe the changing uses of the flags with relation to social events; to analyze some of the controversies arising from those uses; and to consider the merits of the two major sides of contention in the present debate.

Chapter One

The Flags: A Pictorial Introduction

Confederate Flags

Perhaps the most basic problem with studying the controversies arising from the use of Confederate symbols is the difficulty in correctly defining the flags involved, as well as their correct usage. It is often assumed, for instance, that the 2x3 flag[2] depicted in Figure 1, the most familiar of all Confederate symbols, was the national flag of the Confederacy, or at least, that it was the Confederate battle flag. In fact, the Confederacy, during its abbreviated existence, had three national flags, none of which were the design pictured at right.

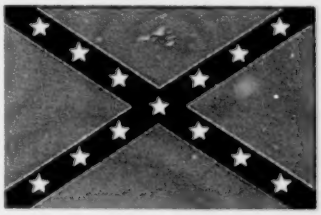

FIGURE 1: CONFEDERATE NAVAL JACK, MAY 1863[1]

The first national flag of the Confederate States of America was the "Stars and Bars," which flew for the first time over the state capitol building in Montgomery, Alabama on 4 March 1861—the same day as Abraham Lincoln's inauguration. The flag contained seven stars, representing the seven states of the Confederacy at that time (Figure 2). In September, six more stars were added to the flag in recognition of the

FIGURE 2: FIRST NATIONAL FLAG OF THE CONFEDERACY (THE "STARS AND BARS"), MARCH 1861[3]

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[1] Illustration from Whitney Smith, *The Flag Book of the United States* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970), 269.

[2] Flag measurements are conventionally given as a ratio of width to length; in this case the width is 2/3 of the length.

[3] Illustration from Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*, 264.

four states admitted since March, as well as the slave-holding states of Kentucky and Missouri, which it was hoped also would join the Confederacy, although they did not. It is significant to add, however, that although an appointed flag committee made reports to the Confederate government in September 1861, no formal action was ever taken, and neither version of the Stars and Bars was ever an official flag of the Confederacy.[4]

Initially, Confederate troops used a battle flag based on the design of the Stars and Bars. This pattern proved troublesome, as it was somewhat similar to the battle flag of the United States. This led to confusion among troops who could not easily distinguish between the two standards under battlefield conditions. After the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861, a suitably distinctive flag was created by Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard. Beauregard's flag consisted of a blue cross of St. Andrew, edged with white, on a red field. Within the cross were thirteen stars, again representing the eleven Confederate states plus Kentucky and Missouri. Beauregard's initial design was oblong, much like the flag pictured in Figure 1; it was General Joseph E. Johnston who gave the flag 1x1 dimensions (Figure 3).[6] First used in late 1861, the flag grew in popularity such that by the end of 1862 it was in wide use throughout the Confederacy as the unofficial national battle standard. By the war's end in 1865, some variation of the

FIGURE 3: CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG, LATE 1861[5]

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[4] "The Confederate Flag," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 24 (1896); Whitney Smith, *The Flag Book of the United States* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1970), 268.

[5] Illustration from Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*, 269.

[6] Forest J. Bowman, "The Unfurled Banners," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 10 (1972), 27. For a first-hand account, see a letter concerning the subject from General Beauregard himself, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 24 January 1872.

"Southern Cross" had been carried by almost all armies of the Confederacy. Nonetheless, like the Stars and Bars, it was never officially recognized by the Confederate government, despite its widespread use.

Thus, contrary to the flag in Figure 1, the true Confederate battle flag was almost invariably square. What the 2x3 banner originally represented was a different branch of the Confederate military, the navy. This Confederate naval jack was created in May 1863, along with a naval ensign designed to replace the Stars and Bars. It, too, lasted until the conclusion of the war. Although this rectangular version was never a national flag of the Confederacy, its use since the end of the war has superseded all other variations to such a degree that it is often proclaimed "the flag of the South" or the "Rebel flag." In the last fifty years, it has further expanded its role to become another symbol in the lexicon of American popular culture.

FIGURE 4: SECOND NATIONAL FLAG OF THE CONFEDERACY (THE "STAINLESS BANNER"), APRIL 1863[7]

The Stars and Bars, in its civilian duty, suffered from the same problem as the first battle flag—it bore too close a resemblance to the Stars and Stripes. In April 1863, the Confederate Congress put the subject of a new national flag to debate. In response, a 1x2 flag was created which incorporated Beauregard's successful and distinctive battle flag pattern (Figure 4). This was known as the "Stainless Banner," the "White Man's Flag" or the "Jackson Flag," this last label stemming from the fact that one of its first official duties was to cover the coffin of General Thomas

[7] Illustration from Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*, 269.

"Stonewall" Jackson. The flag was officially adopted as the national Confederate flag on 1 May 1863. While it was an improvement on the Stars and Bars, some problems still remained. The omission of a proposed blue stripe made it easy to confuse with the British naval ensign, its odd proportions made it appear misshapen when flown in a breeze, and its large expanse of white made it resemble a flag of surrender when hanging limp. On 4 March 1865, the flag was replaced by one with a more conventional 2x3 design, and a red band at the end (Figure 5), although very few were ever made, owing to the fact that the war ended soon after its adoption.

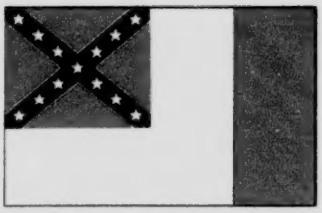

FIGURE 5: THIRD NATIONAL FLAG OF THE CONFEDERACY, MARCH 1865[8]

FIGURE 6: ALABAMA STATE FLAG, 1895-PRESENT[9]

State Flags

One of the key controversies concerning the use of Confederate flags is that they continue to be flown today, either accompanying state flags or as fundamental parts of their designs. As well, other flags exist that certainly show a direct influence taken from Confederate designs or ideas, although these certainly have nowhere near the controversies attached to them as do the former kind.

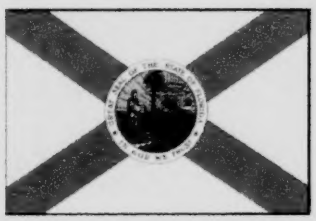

FIGURE 7: FLORIDA STATE FLAG, 1900-PRESENT[10]

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[8] Illustration from Ibid., 272.

[9] Illustration from Ibid., 52.

[10] Illustration from Ibid., 88.

Three former Confederate states whose flags pay homage to the Confederacy are Alabama, Arkansas, and Florida. The Alabama flag (Figure 6) was adopted on 16 February 1895. Both its 1 X 1 ratio and the red cross of St. Andrew were chosen out of affection for the Confederate battle flag.[13] The red cross of St. Andrew on the Florida state flag (Figure 7), added on 6 November 1900, serves the same purpose. The influence of Confederate symbolism on the Arkansas flag (Figure 8), is much more subtle. The red background and the blue stripes forming a diamond pattern are merely in the style of the Confederate battle flag. More important is the single star above the word "Arkansas." This star, officially introduced on 4 April, 1924 was done so to commemorate the Confederacy. It was added to complement the other three stars, representing the nations of Spain, France, and the United States, to which Arkansas land once belonged.[14]

FIGURE 8: ARKANSAS STATE FLAG, 1924-PRESENT[11]

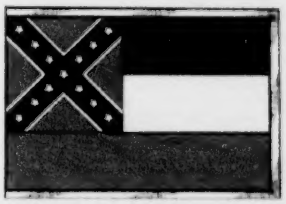

FIGURE 9: MISSISSIPPI STATE FLAG, 1894-PRESENT[12]

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[11] Illustration from Ibid., 61.

[12] Illustration from Ibid., 137.

[13] *Alabama Acts, 1895: Acts of the General Assembly of Alabama Passed at the Session 1894-5, Held in the City of Montgomery, Commencing Tuesday, November 13, 1894, with a separate index to the General and Local Laws* (Roemer Printing Company: Montgomery, 1895), 719, cited in George Earlie Shanklie, *State Names, Flags, Seals, Songs, Birds, Flowers, and Other Symbols* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1938; reprint, Westport: The Greenwood Press, 1970), 264.

[14] *Acts of Arkansas, 1924, Special Session: Acts and Joint and Concurrent resolutions and Memorials of the Forty-fourth General Assembly of the State of Arkansas* (Little Rock: The Democrat Printing and Lithographing Company, 1924) part I, house current resolutions number 11, section 3, 27-28, cited in Shanklie, *State Names*, 266.

The flag of Mississippi (Figure 9), with a Confederate battle flag in its top left corner, was adopted in 1894 as a direct tribute to the Confederacy. Ironically, however, in the report of the flag committee, no mention of a Confederate connection is made. Instead, the flag is merely described as "a union square . . . the ground of the union to be red and a broad blue saltier thereon, bordered with white and emblazoned with thirteen . . . five-pointed stars, corresponding with the number of original States of the Union,"[16] as if no similar emblem had ever existed previously!

FIGURE 10: GEORGIA STATE FLAG, 1879-1905[15]

The most controversial of all state flags is that of Georgia. Since 17 October 1879 there have been four separate versions of the Georgian flag, each of which had distinct Confederate relations. The first post-Reconstruction flag (Figure 10) was basically a Stars and Bars without the stars, and with the blue canton extended into a vertical stripe. The bill adopting the flag was introduced by Herman H. Perry, a lawyer and a former colonel in the Confederate army. On 22 August 1905 the state seal was added to the vertical stripe of the flag, and a subsequent modification to this seal in 1914 resulted in the flag's third

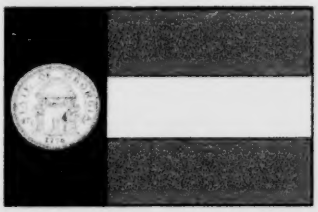

FIGURE 11: GEORGIA STATE FLAG, 1905-1956[17]

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[15] Illustration from Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*, 93.

[16] *Mississippi Laws, 1894: Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Special Session of the Mississippi Legislature Held in the City of Jackson, Commencing January 2, 1894 and Ending February 10, 1894* (Jackson: The Clarion-Ledger Publishing Company, 1894), 33. Quoted in Shankiie, *State Names*, 276.

[17] Illustration from Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*, 93.

version (Figure 11). It is the fourth and most recent variation that has proved to be the most controversial, however. In 1956, John Sammons Bell, chairman of the Georgia Democratic Party, decided that the flag should commemorate the Confederacy in a more direct way. His design replaced the red and white stripes of the Stars and Bars with the Confederate battle flag (Figure 12). According to Bell, the old design had become "meaningless" in the eyes of his contemporaries. To him, the battle flag design was both a more recognizable symbol of the Confederacy and a more appropriate design for honouring southern veterans.[18] There has been some debate, especially within the last five years, as to whether the flag change had more to do with opposition to segregation than it did with desires for Civil War remembrance.

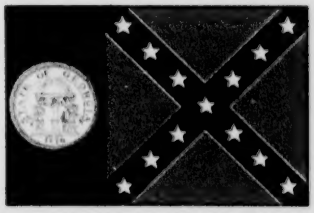

FIGURE 12: GEORGIA STATE FLAG, 1956-PRESENT[19]

[18] Charles Lunsford, *The Story of the Georgia Flag: A Southern Perspective*, sound recording by the author, 1993, cassette.

[19] Illustration from Smith, *Flag Book of the United States*., 93.

Chapter Two

Furl That Banner!

Furl that Banner, softly, slowly!
Treat it gently – it is holy –
For it droops above the dead.
Touch it not – unfurl it never,
Let it droop there, furled forever,
For its people's hopes are dead. [1]

Father Abraham J. Ryan, a Maryland chaplain and Confederate sympathiser, penned these words scant hours after hearing of General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in May of 1865. The poem's mournful and pathetic sentiments echoed the feelings of white citizens throughout the length and breadth of the former Confederate states in the weeks and months following capitulation. "There was in the people themselves, especially in the women, an air of sadness which was as painful as it was natural,"[2] remembered one commentator. A publication of Mary Chesnut's famous diaries ends on 26 July 1865 with the telling words "the weight that hangs upon our eyelids – is of lead."[3] Loss and destruction of property, the death of brothers, sons, fathers and husbands, and the resultant hardships these things created had taken their toll on Southern society. But perhaps more discouraging and depressing than any of these was the general sense of helplessness and hopelessness that inevitably follows the defeat of one's dreams.

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[1] Quoted in Hodding Carter, "Furl that Banner?" *New York Times Magazine*, 25 July 1965, 13.

[2] *Charleston Sunday News*, 14 November 1886. Quoted in Paul H. Buck, *The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 35.

[3] *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward, (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1995), 836.

Said one Confederate soldier before the final surrender, "My shoes are gone; my clothes are almost gone. I'm weary, I'm sick, I'm hungry. My family have been killed or scattered. . . . And I have suffered all this for my country. I love my country, but if this war is ever over, I'll be damned if I ever love another country."[4] The boisterous pride that had been characteristic of the Confederacy in its early days had been all but extinguished by four years of hardship and loss. For the time being, the flag truly was furled.

Despite the general malaise that hung over the white population of the South, the effort the region produced in the "late war" did not go unheralded for long. Beginning in the fall of 1865, mere months after the final surrender of the last Confederate troops, a memorial movement began to take root. Women in several small towns throughout the South began memorializing their fallen soldiers, most often through the auspices of organizations known collectively as Ladies' Memorial Associations.[5] These associations saw the proper internment of dead Confederate soldiers as their primary goal and were especially prominent in Southern towns close to battlefields. This cause, combined with the general feeling of the period, resulted in tributes of a sepulchral nature—war cemeteries, and, if the town was large enough, a suitably somber monument as well, which, more often than not, was placed in the cemetery rather than in a prominent public

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[4] Quoted in Geoffery C. Ward, Ric Burns and Ken Burns, *The Civil War: An Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 402.

[5] Despite the widespread use of the name, no formal organization existed beyond the local level. As the name suggests, they were primarily made up of women, although in some cases men played roles, such as the involvement of Francis Dawson in the creation of the Hollywood Memorial Association in Richmond. Gaines M. Foster, "Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, History, and the Culture of the New South, 1865-1913" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1982), 78.

place.[6]

It was also at this time that the observance of Memorial Day originated. According to legend, Lizzie Rutherford of Columbus, Georgia, hit upon the idea while reading about a German Catholic custom of decorating church graveyards on All Saint's Day. No doubt influenced by the proliferation of war memorials and war cemeteries, she decided that a special day dedicated to the decoration of Confederate graves was in order.[7] The first Memorial Day observances were held in 1866, and the idea spread rapidly not only in the South but throughout the nation. By 1868, the day had become so popular in the North that the Grand Army of the Republic, the association of Union veterans, officially recognised it. In all cases, the nature of the observances was remarkably similar. The citizens of the town or area would gather at the war cemetery to decorate the graves of soldiers. There would also be a religious service, with prayers and hymns, and in some cases, a speech would be given about the brave sacrifice of soldiers. The service was most often given at the cemetery itself, although public places such as town halls were not uncommon sites.

Confederate regalia was not present at these functions, an omission that would seem quite incongruous to modern eyes. This may have been partly due to federal

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[6] According to Gaines M. Foster, of the monuments erected between 1856 and 1884, 70 percent were placed in cemeteries. Of these, only about 35 percent were of soldiers, the rest being of symbolic, funereal themes. Ibid., 81.

[7] It is much more likely that the holiday developed independently in many areas. Many towns other than Columbus also claim to be the founder of the event, although each basic story is much the same. As well, different areas of the South observed on different days – the deep South preferred 26 April (the date of Joseph Johnston's surrender), South and North Carolina preferred 10 May (the day "Stonewall" Jackson died), while in other states the date varied from early May to mid-June. Ibid., 82-3.

restrictions on Confederate memorial ceremonies, which lasted throughout the 1860s.[8] It was however, mostly due to the nature of the observances themselves, and, again, the general feeling throughout the South. At this time, the Civil War and the Southern war effort were not viewed with much pride or favour, and the memorial movement did not attempt to glorify either combat or combatants. What it did do was give white Southerners an outlet for grief in a difficult time, and as the need for such an outlet declined in the early 1870s, so did the memorial movement. But while the memorial movement did not give a blueprint for resurrecting Southern pride, it did have a lasting impact on the way the South viewed the war, due to the intense spiritual nature of its observances. The movement and its imagery of sacrifice and martyrdom essentially placed the war, and its participants, on a higher plane of existence, spiritually and morally. It was the beginnings of a fond myth that white Southerners could look back upon and evoke as a better time, especially when the times they found themselves in were challenging.

The decade of the 1870s saw a decline in the number of public displays dedicated to the Confederate memory. The memorial movement had more or less run its course, and although monuments and cemeteries were still being dedicated, the actions of the Ladies' Memorial Associations had tailed off by mid-decade. The interest of the section had clearly turned from the woe of the past to the vital issues of the present. But despite this lack of interest among the general population, two movements which arose among a limited number of men—the "Lost Cause" literary movement and the veterans'

[8] For instance, as late as 1869, federal soldiers and Union veterans stood guard over Confederate graves at Arlington to prevent them from being decorated. Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 122.

movement—began to give added credence and respect to the defeated heroes of the Confederacy. Indeed, one such group of men, an assemblage of Virginians, founded both the most influential veterans' group and the most popular and influential of the "Lost Cause" periodicals. This combination would exert a great influence on the formation of Confederate attitudes and myths, many of which last to the present day.

The "Lost Cause" literary movement was largely made up of writers and magazine publishers who attempted to present Southern views, and justifications, of the "late unpleasantness." Its origins lay in the several small-scale periodicals that arose in various Southern centres in the years after the war. *Scott's Monthly Magazine* and *The Sunny South*, both published in Atlanta, the rejuvenated *DeBow's Review* out of New Orleans, Augusta's *Banner of the South*, and *The Land We Love* from Charlotte were the most significant titles.[9] These magazines featured articles of interest to a white Southern readership. Some of these magazines published articles of a racist nature. Many published war stories and other bits of militaria—*The Sunny South*, for instance, served as a kind of Confederate veterans' journal. Others, such as *Scott's Monthly*, saw themselves as mediums for "literary elevation and enfranchisement."[10] All of them were, however, kindred in their failure. The Southern magazines could not compete with northern periodicals in attracting writers, nor could they compete with local newspapers and farm journals for the scarce dollars of the reading public. By the end of the 1870s, the great majority of the post-war journals had folded.

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[9] For a more complete discussion of these, and other, Southern periodicals, see Susan Speare Durant, "The Gently Furled Banner: The Development of the Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1972).

These first attempts were already beginning to be superseded in the early 1870s by writers and publishers who had no qualms about touting their chauvinism. Southern sectionalism "was no longer a sideshow, but was in the center ring."[11] Two important books, Edward S. Pollard's *The Lost Cause* and former Confederate vice-president Alexander Stephens' *A Constitutional View of the Late War* appeared in the early 1870s. Both of these defended antebellum Southern society, and the Confederacy's right to secede and exist as an independent entity, crediting the Confederacy with being the true embodiment of the revolutionary heritage of 1776. These sentiments were also taken up by new periodicals. The *Southern Magazine*, formerly the official publication of the Southern History Association, took such a stance after suffering fifteen years of rocky publishing.[12] This change helped only slightly however, and the periodical folded within a few years. Baltimore's *The Southern Review* was an even greater example of an unreconstructed bulletin. Despite its stronger tone, it too fell by the wayside in the early 1870s, despite an association in its later years with the Southern Methodist church. Once again, hard times and a greater interest in northern periodicals caused the death of these journals. "The truth is," said one sad commentator, "our people do not care for homewares. They prefer the foreign product."[13]

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[10] John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1975), 297.

[11] Durant, "Gently Furled Banner", 35.

[12] The journal began as the *Richmond Eclectic* in 1866, before moving to Baltimore in 1868 and taking the title of *The New Eclectic*. It then merged with *The Land We Love* and became the SHA's newsletter. This association did not benefit the journal, and in 1871 the name was changed to the *Southern Magazine*, with an added dedication to the ideals of the "Lost Cause."

[13] Ezell, *The South Since 1865*, 298.

In the late 1860s, the first Confederate veterans' associations were founded.[14] These groups essentially came in on the heels of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), although on a much smaller scale. The major problems these infant associations faced, as did the GAR, was recruiting enough members to stay solvent. A lack of organizational skill, and above all, a general noncommittal attitude among veterans, led to many of these groups' early demise. In 1869, two such well-meaning but short-lived groups were founded. The first, the Confederate Relief and Historical Society (CRHS) was founded in Memphis on 2 July 1869. Its goals were primarily to provide relief to veterans, widows and orphans, as well as to collect and preserve war records.[15] Its roster included many prominent Confederates, including Jefferson Davis, Generals Nathan Bedford Forrest and Richard S. Ewell, and Admiral Raphael Semmes. The group was unable to shake the apathy of the 1870s, though, and folded in that decade's early years.

The second major group was the Confederate Survivors' Association of South Carolina (CSASC). A state-wide organization, the group organized in August 1869 and held its first meeting on 18 November in Charleston. Like the CRHS, the CSASC had as its goals veterans' aid and the preservation of records. The association also had more of an interest in future generations, as it also sought the publication of a standard school history text so that the "part the Confederacy bore in the late war may be properly related

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[14] Actually, the Ku Klux Klan can certainly be considered one of the first associations of Confederate veterans. It was founded in late 1865 or early 1866, and its initial membership was almost exclusively made up of Southern veterans. Its 1868 prescript contained several goals other groups would also take up, including the protection of widows and orphans of Confederate veterans. See the prescript in J.C. Lester and D.L. Wilson, *The Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment* (1884; reprint, New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1905), 155.

[15] *New York Times*, 6 July 1869.

to the world; and that the rising generation may be taught that their parents were not the vile traitors that the common school histories now prepared by our enemies assert."[16] In keeping with the trend of having famous officers as executives, the first president of the association was General Wade Hampton. While the group's annual meeting, held during the South Carolina State Fair, was a somewhat popular feature for a few years, it eventually followed the CRHS into obscurity.

One minor reason why most of these groups and periodicals fell by the wayside may have been the overwhelming influence of a clique of veterans in Virginia, and the associations which grew up around them. The first and most prominent, the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia (AANV) was founded in November 1870, a little over a month after the death of Robert E. Lee. It was to become the most important veterans' group of the 1870s. The group was similar to its predecessors in many ways. It had a Confederate commander, General Jubal Early, at its head, and its aims were much like previous groups, being mainly concerned with aiding veterans and preserving the memory of the Confederacy. In addition, however, the Virginians borrowed liberally from the pages of the Lost Causers, infusing their reunions with strong pro-Southern attitudes. At AANV reunions, veterans often displayed their loyalty to the United States,[17] but at the same time they also vigorously defended their conduct in the war, and the necessity of keeping Southern pride alive. At the 1874 reunion, for instance, General

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[16] *New York Times*, 23 November 1869.

[17] General Joseph E. Johnson said, at the 1874 reunion in Augusta, "Let us obey all the laws. Let us divest these meetings of all political significance, and show the people that we meet only to perpetuate the memory of our dead." *Augusta Constitutionalist*, 17 December 1874, quoted in *New York Times*, 20 December 1874.

Calbraith Butler warned against the "general submerging of the South in the nation of the future," and instructed veterans that they should never "lose sight of the fact that they had once been Southern soldiers."[18]

It was only a matter of time before the AANV took an active role in the medium which had influenced its members the most—the "Lost Cause" periodical. This foray started with the association's absorption of the faltering Southern Historical Society (SHS) in 1873. The SHS was founded in New Orleans on 1 May 1869 with the dual and predictable aims of promoting a Southern view of Civil War history and preserving the honour of the Confederate soldier. Its initial founders included former generals Braxton Bragg and P.G.T. Beauregard, who intended the society to expand from New Orleans to points throughout the South. Economics, poor planning, and ideas of the time conspired against such plans. SHS membership remained small and the society was in constant danger of collapse. In 1873, the society enlisted the aid of AANV head Jubal Early, who by that time had become well-known as a booster of Southern societies. Early assisted the group in his own unique way—he and his Virginian partners took it over. By 1875, the SHS had moved to Richmond with Early as its permanent president and several other of the Virginians in executive offices.

In 1876, the AANV began using the SHS to further its own ideals by publishing a periodical, the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. The *Papers*' public intentions were to publish first-hand records—diaries, memoirs and official documents—which would properly represent and preserve the Confederate views of the war. The contents,

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[18] Ibid.

generally, were very much like many of the other "Lost Cause" publications that had come before, the only difference being the *Papers*' greater emphasis on history; although even then, the journal was little more than a sounding board for the Virginian clique and the emerging cult of Robert E. Lee. For instance, in its first year of publication, the *Papers* produced twenty-nine articles on Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, as opposed to five articles concerned with military events in all other theatres. In 1877, the tally was forty-four Virginia articles, and, again, five others. After some protests, readers were assured that the battles in the west would get full attention. In the following issue, a mere eighty percent of the articles were dedicated to the men of Virginia.[19] The familiar defences of the Confederacy and its legitimacy were presented, as well as several other, relatively new ideas. The South's loss in the Civil War was basically boiled down to simple apologia, depending mainly on the "overwhelmed-by-numbers explanation and the Longstreet-lost-it-at-Gettysburg excuse."[20] Today, these excuses sound commonplace—even, to some, quite reasonable. At the time, however, many publications tended to ascribe blame to either the Confederate government or the common soldiery—ideas that did not disappear until the 1890s.[21] Furthermore, the placing of Longstreet on the incompetent's chair probably had less to do with his actual actions in the war than it did with his scalawag-ish conduct after the war, and the need to find a scapegoat for the

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[19] Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 73-4.

[20] Foster, "Ghosts of the Confederacy", 115.

[21] "It was not the Federal army that defeated the permanent establishment of the Confederacy – it was the failure of nearly two-thirds of our rank and file that caused the ultimate decline and fall of the Confederacy." W.H. Havron, "Editorial Notes and Comments – Come to the Front," *The Confederate Veteran Magazine* I (April 1890), 371, quoted in Durant, "Gently Furled Banner", 81.

incompetencies of several of the Virginians, Early being the most prominent.[22] Of course, the AANV was more than willing to present its own heroes in the conflict—namely, the men of the Army of Northern Virginia and, above all, its leader, General Robert E. Lee,[23] who was exalted to the status of a near deity.

The *Papers* was undoubtedly the longest lasting and most popular of the "Lost Cause" journals, and was published regularly until around 1884.[24] But it could not ignore the realities of the time. While attitudes had changed towards the war since the later 1860s, attitudes towards historical journals had not, and so the *Papers* never enjoyed a large readership. The AANV realised this, and refused to make the *Papers* the association's sole voice. Throughout the 1870s and early 1880s, the SHS and the AANV sponsored extensive speaking tours and fund raising drives, featuring Confederate commanders such as Generals George Johnston and Fitzhugh Lee (nephew of Robert E. Lee). Civil War books by authors outside of the Virginia fold—particularly if they dealt with Robert E. Lee or the Army of Northern Virginia—were regularly scrutinized and

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[22] After the war, Longstreet joined the Republican party and was afterward appointed to several offices throughout the remainder of his life, including postmaster, federal marshal, and American ambassador to Turkey. As for Gettysburg, other leaders, especially Early himself, deserved more blame than Longstreet for the defeat. Early also held the dubious honour of being the only corps commander Robert E. Lee ever dismissed, after the former's disastrous campaign in the Shenandoah Valley in 1865. Early's reputation was further besmirched by his removal to Latin America and, later Canada, after the war. He did not return to the South until 1869. For more on Early and his role as propagandizer, see Connelly, *Marble Man*, 51-6.

[23] While Lee was certainly a popular general after the war, he was nowhere near the figure many now see him as. In 1865 for instance, P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph Johnston were nearly his equals in popularity, while the late Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was undoubtedly a more favoured figure. By the 1880s and 1890s, thanks mainly to Early and the Virginians' smear tactics and partisan reporting, Lee had risen to a towering stature, while Jackson was downgraded to little more than a valuable assistant.

[24] After this time, the *Papers*' quality and frequency began to decline until, by the early part of the twentieth century, it was little more than a Confederate clipping service, reprinting articles from newspapers and other journals. The name *Southern Historical Society Papers* was resurrected in the 1910s and 20s to reprint the records of the Confederate Congress.

criticized, both in the pages of the *Papers* and by the travelling speakers. Other authors, even Jefferson Davis himself, were given inducements to encourage them to say more favourable things about Lee, the Army of Northern Virigina, and the AANV cadre.[25] But although the AANV succeeded in spreading its message, it did not witness a great increase in its membership. The AANV, it must be pointed out, was a more restrictive association than the GAR or the later Confederate groups. Popularity was not its aim. The key goal of the Virginians was to defend themselves in the eye of history, and to make popular their take on the Southern view of the war. Although their means may be called into question, they were far more successful and influential than any who came before. The AANV was able to take the glory and romance of the pro-Southern side, the gallantry and nobility of the heroes of the Army of Northern Virginia, and a position that held the Confederate soldier in higher esteem, and place all of these things into the hands of the people who appreciated them the most.

It is easy to dismiss the "Lost Cause" publications and the early groups of the veterans' movement as the work of ardent Southerners whose words and works were not in touch with the attitude of the times. In a symbolic sense, however, the Lost Cause writers added flesh to the skeleton which the memorial associations had constructed. To be considered a true martyr, one must have died for a cause, virtuous and true, that was worth fighting for. Thanks to the groundwork laid by the men of the "Lost Cause" literary tradition, the South could begin to feel a pride in its ideas equal to the pride felt for its

[25] In the case of Davis, Fitzhugh Lee and Early gave him evidence of incompetent wartime behavior on the parts of Beauregard and Joseph Johnston, as well as the promise of an SHS-sponsored Southern lecture tour. Connelly, *Marble Man*, 77-78.

sacrifice. With the foundation of the first veterans' associations, Southerners began to see that the Confederate legacy was not buried, but lived on in its old soldiers. Finally, with the advent of the AANV and the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, old and shame-filled ideas about the war began to disappear. By the late 1870s, a more favourable view of the Confederacy combined with the end of Reconstruction and the beginnings of a rebirth of Southern prosperity to change the way the war was both viewed and remembered. The apathy was beginning to disappear and Southern pride was on the rise. The flag was about to be unfurled.

Chapter Three

The Banners Unfurl

From the late 1860s until the middle 1870s, Southern memories of the Civil War were, in turn, mournfully honored, grudgingly recalled on occasion, and finally, for the most part, shrugged off. Starting in the late 1870s however, these views began to shift in a more positive, "upbeat" direction. Economic and political developments helped to nurture this feeling. The process of rebuilding the damage caused by the war, the rejuvenation of agriculture, and the foundation of new industries imparted a greater sense of optimism among white Southerners. At the same time, the gradual fading of federal will to reform Southern racial inequities returned home rule to the section, and created even greater inequities. There was, in the eyes of the white South, a repudiation of Reconstruction ethics and an acceptance, with the exception of slavery and secession, of antebellum ideals. New feelings in regard to the Confederate past that arose during this time can be seen in many aspects of Southern life. A rise in the popularity of Memorial Day and Decoration Day observances; the change in such events from solemn commemorations to wild celebrations; an upsurge in the construction of monuments; and the formation of a second wave of Confederate societies, with the United Confederate Veterans being the most significant—all were indicative of such changes. By the late 1890s, the views originally espoused by the Lost Causers and later buoyed by the influence of Early's Virginians and several other, less important organizations, had begun to be accepted by white Southerners as a whole. No longer was the Confederacy a dead

organism from a shame-filled past. It was an honorable part of Southern history, the previous existence of which could be celebrated, and its living remnants—the soldiers of the Confederacy—could be honored, without undue sorrow. In many cases, the flags of the Confederacy, the most palpable symbols of the reborn South, rode in the vanguard.

During the 1870s, the Southern states had at last begun to throw off the aura of poverty and destruction that the war had brought with it. By 1873, not only had the 10,000 miles of pre-war railroad track the South possessed been put into good repair, additional construction had nearly doubled its total.[1] Agricultural production was also making gains against the devastation wrought by the war. Although the decades of the 1870s and 80s produced both the detrimental crop-lien system and an increased reliance on the major cash crops of tobacco and cotton, the wealth produced by agriculture finally began to approach pre-war figures. These totals were further bolstered by the development of new and more reliable areas of production, such as cotton in the Mississippi delta, rice in Louisiana, and both cotton and livestock in Texas. Industry also began to expand. Between 1880 and 1890, the number of Southern textile mills trebled, and by 1900, the percentage of the nation's cotton spindles in the Southern states had risen from five percent to twenty-three percent. Tobacco manufacturing, mainly centered in North Carolina and Virginia, witnessed a greater than fifty percent increase in the same time period. In northern Alabama and southern Tennessee, the ready availability of coal, iron ore, and limestone combined to make the new city of Birmingham "the Pittsburgh of

[1] Paul H. Buck, *The Road to Reunion: 1865-1900* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 161.

the South."[2] Between 1880 and 1890, thanks in no small part to the investments of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, the Southern share of national pig iron production doubled from nine to eighteen percent.[3] Production of nitrates also enjoyed a small boom in South Carolina, and the lumber industry in northern Mississippi and Alabama increased at such a rate that these states led the nation in production by 1895.[4] Many of these gains paled, however, in comparison to the giant strides made in the North, and it would still be several more decades before the South would revert to its pre-war status in relation to the rest of the nation. Nonetheless, the economic developments that took place starting in the late 1870s at least afforded a more optimistic outlook for the section's inhabitants.

At the same time, the political outlook for white Southerners living in the former Confederate states began to improve for the first time since the end of the war. Federal, Republican power was in retreat, having been beaten both by the determination of the South and the apathy of the North. The influence of the "Redeemers," so named because they were the ones chosen to "redeem" the South from the "sins" of Reconstruction, was on the rise. In 1872, Congress passed the Amnesty Act, which restored political rights to 150,000 ex-Confederates. By 1876, the Supreme Court had handed down three decisions

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[2] Birmingham was founded in 1871, but boomed in the later part of the century. Between 1880 and 1900, its population grew from 3,086 to 38,415. Wendell Holmes Stevenson and E. Merton Coulter, eds., *A History of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), vol. 9, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, by C. Vann Woodward, 136.

[3] James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 610.

[4] John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 150.

which reduced federal protection for blacks: the 1873 *Slaughter House Cases*,[5] and the 1876 *United States* v. *Reese* and *United States* v. *Cruikshank* decisions.[6] In 1877, an informal compromise between Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans removed federal troops from the last states occupied—South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana—in exchange for promises of support for Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes. Predictably, the Reconstruction Republican governments of these states toppled in short order. In 1883 the Supreme Court judged that the 1875 Civil Rights Act—a law prohibiting segregation and racial discrimination—was unconstitutional on the grounds that Congress could only act against discrimination practiced by states, not individuals. When the 1888 election of Benjamin Harrison gave the Republicans the presidency, as well as control over the Senate and House of Representatives, a final, failing attempt was made at upholding the spirit of Reconstruction. The Blair Bill, which proposed federal aid to education of both black and white children, passed the Senate for the third time in 1888, but failed to make it to the floor of the House. Even more important was Henry Cabot Lodge's Force Bill of 1889, which would have allowed the federal government to appoint supervisors in order to oversee elections, a concern due to the fraudulent and

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[5] *Slaughterhouse* took advantage of unclear wording in the Fourteenth Amendment. The Amendment proclaimed all persons born or naturalized in the United States citizens of the United States and the state they reside in; it also forbade the states from making laws interfering with the rights of citizens of the United States. The *Slaughterhouse* decision took this wording to mean that the rights of state and national citizenship were different, and that the former could be violated without redress from the federal government.

[6] *Cruikshank* concerned indictments arising out of the Colfax massacre, a clash between black militia and armed whites in the northern Louisiana town of Colfax in which two whites and perhaps seventy blacks were killed. *Reese* had to do with an effort made by Kentucky whites to prevent blacks of that state from voting. Both indictments were dismissed due to questions of the constitutionality of the 1870 Enforcement Act upon which they were based.

violent nature of post-Reconstruction, Southern elections.[7] While the Force Bill passed the House, it was halted in the Senate by a Democratic filibuster and eventually abandoned. The federal government would not make another attempt to reform the South for close to sixty years.

At the same time, state governments began to issue acts restricting the rights of their black citizens. In 1877, it was judged in the *Hall* v. *de Cuir* case that a state could not prohibit segregation on common carriers. The Supreme Court followed up this ruling in 1890 with the *Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railroads* v. *Mississippi* decision, which allowed states to constitutionally require segregation on such carriers. Finally, the 1896 *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* case removed federal authority from the private realm as effectively as the defeat of the Lodge Force Bill removed it from the public. "Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts. . . ." proclaimed the court. "If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them on the same plane."[8] These decisions opened the door to the multitude of "Jim Crow" segregation laws which arose in the ensuing decades.[9]

Buoyed by an upsurge in radical, violent racism in the late 1880s,[10] and by the removal of the fear of federal reprisals, Southern legislators turned their attentions to a

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[7] Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 113.

[8] *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, 163 U.S., 540-552, quoted in Thomas D. Clark, ed., *The South Since Reconstruction* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1973), 167.

[9] For a more complete discussion, see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[10] Beginning in the late 1880s, the entire nation, and especially the South, witnessed an upsurge in lynching, which, as one historian has put it, "stands out like some giant volcanic eruption on the landscape of Southern race relations." In the 1890s, an estimated 82 percent of lynchings in the United States

more controversial plan – the disenfranchisement of their black, voting populations. The major problems with such a plan were twofold. Firstly, blacks had to be disenfranchised without the law actually saying so; and secondly, the law had to be loose enough so that poor whites would not be excluded in too great numbers. The solution came in 1890, from Mississippi. Changes to the constitution required that all potential voters be registered by state officials, preventing the intrusion of federal Republicans. Voters also could not have been charged with a certain crimes. The crimes specified, however, were crimes more commonly committed by blacks, such as arson, bigamy and petty theft; crimes committed more often by whites, such as murder and grand larceny, were not grounds for voter disqualification.[11] A poll tax of two dollars was required to be paid by all able-bodied voters between the ages of twenty-one and sixty. The most infamous part of the new provisions was section five with its "understanding clause." It specified that after 1 January 1892 every voter must be able to read any part of the state constitution or "be able to understand the same when read to him, or give a reasonable interpretation thereof."[12] It was a very subjective exam, and usually there was a general understanding that while any white men tested would pass, blacks would fail. In other states, different means were used to achieve the same ends. Louisiana, for instance, instituted the

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occurred in the Southern states. In 1892, the year the violence peaked, 156 blacks were killed in such a manner. Joel Williamson, *Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 117.

[11] Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 148.

[12] Mississippi Constitution (1890), quoted in Albert D. Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925* (University of Kentucky Press, 1951; reprint, Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1964), 69.

"grandfather" clause in 1898. This clause relied on the idea that a man could qualify to vote if he had an ancestor who either had voted in a year prior to 1867,[13] or who had given military service to the state or nation. While the grandfather clause eliminated the subjective nature of the understanding clause, it certainly did nothing for the black franchise, and those who applied to vote under it were usually white. Finally, the institution of the state-wide primary was introduced. While it was also created out of a need for electoral reform, the existence of the primary allowed the issue of voter qualification to be handled, to a limited degree, by the private institution of the all-white party. This was the final roadblock to the black who owned property, could read, and could pay the poll tax. By 1915, all of the former states of the Confederacy, as well as Kentucky and Oklahoma, had instituted one or all of these "reforms." Their efficiency can be seen in the voting lists. In Louisiana, 130,334 blacks were registered in 1896. Eight years later the total had fallen to 1,342.[14] In 1876, in Mississippi, 52,000 Republican votes had been cast for Hayes. In 1892, however, only 1500 votes were cast for Harrison, and until 1920, the total Republican count did not exceed 6000.[15] The most pernicious concept that the radical Reconstructionists could fight for in the minds of the white Southerner—the equality of blacks and whites—was fought and defeated. The most favorable concept—that of the white Southerner ruling his home state under his own rules—was victorious.

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[13] 1867 was chosen because blacks were not allowed to vote in state elections at that time.

[14] Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 85.

[15] Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks*, 72.

This economic and political rejuvenation, combined with the length of time which had passed since the end of the war, served to ease many of the sorrowful and painful memories with which white Southerners associated the death of the old South. As a result, the memorial doldrums of the early 1870s began to disappear, and the desire to commemorate the Civil War and the South's role in it waxed instead of waned. In the late 1870s, attendance at Confederate Memorial Day and Decoration Day observations rose for the first time in the decade. Increasingly, these ceremonies ceased to be staid memorials, and began to function as sounding boards for the ideas of the Lost Cause and as showcases for the local veterans' groups. The focus of attention shifted from honoring the dead to respecting the living survivors, either in person by way of a veterans' parade, or through glorifying their cause through speech—something that would have been unheard of a few years prior. In 1878, for instance, Jefferson Davis wrote a message to be delivered in Macon, Georgia, during Confederate Memorial Day observances. In it, he praised the "heroes" of the South, saying that "theirs is the crown which sparkles with the gems of patriotism and righteousness."[16] Two items in this quote are of interest. Firstly, and more noticeable, is the usual phraseology of the Lost Causers, justifying the role of the Confederate soldier. Secondly, and more interesting, is the use of the present tense to describe the Confederate soldier. It is a minor difference from previous addresses, yet very telling, as it shows how the focus had changed from the dead to the living.

Along with this change in focus came a rebirth in the "furled banners" of the Confederacy. This was more of a gradual change. In 1876 the *Chattanooga Commercial* printed an editorial decrying the creation of a standard by a memorial group which

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[16] *New York Times*, 27 April 1878.

intertwined the Stars and Stripes and the Confederate flag. To the writer, the Confederate flag was a meaningless reminder of a dead past; to entwine the national flag with it was, to him, like binding together "a living giant and an Egyptian mummy."[17] Less than four years later, in April 1880, however, the people of Columbus, Georgia, threw away all such reservations by making Confederate flags a prominent part of Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies, alongside state and national emblems. One citizen asked rhetorically in a letter to the Columbus paper, "is it disloyal to recommend that the Confederate flag be displayed on Southern memorial days? If so, we are going to do something terribly outrageous."[18] Two years later, in a gesture dripping in symbolism, the Confederate Survivors' Association changed its emblem from a black ribbon to a brace of Confederate flags. It must be added, though, that while Confederate flags were beginning to be a part of several such ceremonies, they still were not flown by the general population. The banners that were flown were most often the battle standards of the various regiments of veterans participating in the observances. For instance, in 1883, General Fitzhugh Lee gave a speech in Houston, Texas in front of a bullet-ridden standard of Texas veterans.[19] Despite these initial limitations, this development in the flying of Confederate flags marked another slight change in attitude. No longer were these banners associated exclusively with the dead, and a dead cause. The paraded flag,

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[17] *Chattanooga Commercial*, 14 July 1876, quoted in *New York Times*, 16 July 1876.

[18] *Columbus Enquirer*, 22 April 1880.

[19] *Southern Historical Society Papers*, 11 (1883), 232.

like the marching veterans, was a reminder that the Southern heritage of the Civil War still lived on.

Beginning in the early 1880s, Confederate commemoratives started to change even more. Construction of memorials, which had trailed off in the early 1870s, was renewed with an even greater vigor than before. These memorials differed from those earlier examples both in theme and location. No longer were the majority of constructions centered around an abstract, sepulchral theme. The monuments of the 1880s and 1890s were martial monuments to human forms; either nameless soldiers[20] or, increasingly, prominent Confederate commanders, with the likeness of Lee being a favorite choice. By 1892, the citizens of Richmond had spent an estimated $750,000 on monuments to Lee, Jackson, cavalry general James Ewell Brown ("Jeb") Stuart, and several others. One New Orleans cemetery constructed four monuments, including one of Lee, for a total cost of $150,000.[21] Indeed, this Southern craze for statuary was so great that in 1904 the town of Thomson, Georgia, erected a monument to the woman responsible for erecting the town's Civil War monument.[22] These memorials were most often placed in prominent public places, such as in parks or in front of courthouses and other civic buildings.

At the same time, ceremonies dedicated to the Confederate memory started to

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[20] Between 1865 and 1885, an estimated 22% of memorials constructed featured the average Confederate soldier. This figure rose to 62% for monuments made between 1885 and 1899, and to 81% for ones built from 1900 to 1912. Gaines M. Foster, "Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, History, and the Culture of the New South, 1865-1913" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1982), ch.4, fn.44, for both references and a description of methodology used.

[21] Connelly, *Marble Man*, 110.

[22] Susan Speare Durant, "The Gently Furled Banner: The Development of the Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1972), 184.

change in attitude, from eulogies to celebrations. In October 1883, for instance, Richmond society held a "Confederate Ball", an event somewhat like the colonial balls popular at the time, the difference being that the participants dressed in Confederate costume rather than colonial.[23] The major memorial events of the time, beginning with observances held in Montgomery in 1886 and lasting until the early part of the twentieth century, not only best represent this change, they also represent the high points of the Confederate remembrance movement. The 1886 ceremonies began on Monday, 26 April, Confederate Memorial Day, and lasted for most of the week. It was a week, said one commentator "that promises to witness scenes of greater importance historically in this section of the country than any other that have occurred since the close of the war."[24] Between ten and twenty thousand Southerners from all parts of the former Confederacy converged on the Alabama capital for three days of celebration. As the *Montgomery Dispatch* described it, "nothing like it has ever been witnessed here, and will not be again for a century."[25] An unquestioned highlight of the event was a speech given by Jefferson Davis himself, which marked his return to public life. Furthermore, the speech was given on the steps of the Montgomery Court House, the same location where he had accepted the presidency of the Confederate States only a little more than twenty-five years before. Davis said, in a characteristic tone, that the welcome given him showed "that the spirit of Southern liberty is not dead."[26] The most significant event, however, was a triumphant

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[23] *Richmond Dispatch*, 12 October 1883.

[24] *New York Times*, 27 April 1886.

[25] *Montgomery Dispatch*, 27 April, 1886.

[26] *Richmond Dispatch*, 29 April 1886.

parade of Confederate veterans, some bearing their old battle standards. In an odd bit of incongruity, however, not only did the veterans wear the blue of the Union, they also bore the Stars and Stripes at the heads of their columns in a gesture of loyalty. Indeed, even among the boosters of Montgomery, the emblems of the United States far outstripped those of the ex-Confederacy, which were "modestly tucked away among the profusion of Union bunting."[27] By the end of the festivities, however, the crowd had apparently realized this irony. The correspondent for the *New York Times* remarked at how "[those in the crowd] are beginning to see the ludicrousness of waving the flag of the Union and at the same time shouting for the man who defies it and its authority."[28] It was a strange feature that would not be present for much longer. Indeed, when this same reporter, at the beginning of the event, compared Davis to Marc Antony, saying "when his few words over the resurrected corpse of the Confederacy have been spoken it will sink again into its everlasting grave . . . and the waters of oblivion will close over it forever,"[29] he could not have been more wrong.

Occasions such as this were repeated throughout the South in the ensuing two decades, some to even wilder success. The next great Confederate "rally" occurred on 29 May 1890 with the unveiling of an equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee in Richmond. So massive was the monument that it took the efforts of nine thousand men to drag it into place. Their exertions did not go to waste, as the ceremony attracted over one hundred

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[27] *New York Times*, 28 April 1886.

[28] *New York Times*, 30 April 1886. When Davis spoke, a giant American flag floated above the speakers' platform.

[29] *New York Times*, 27 April 1886.

thousand spectators, the largest crowd ever assembled for any Confederate memorial.[30] Like the previous celebrations, this one featured speeches and a large parade of Confederate veterans flying both their battle standards and the flag of the United States.[31] Unlike similar monument-raising events, however, this was undoubtedly a festival, and not a solemn observance. The Confederate banners were now also in the hands of civilians, and a cheerful atmosphere was more in evidence, including the presence of bands and other entertainment. In 1894, this event was equaled in scale by the unveiling of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, again in Richmond. Once more, an estimated one-hundred thousand celebrants watched a parade of ten thousand marchers including a group of two thousand Confederate-flag waving children. This time, the majority of celebrants "wore Confederate colors or carried Confederate flags."[32] In 1903, the annual reunion of the United Confederate Veterans, held in New Orleans, outdrew Mardi Gras celebrations, and the streets of the city were bedecked with the bunting and flags of the Confederacy.[33]

Throughout the South until about 1915, these celebrations continued with varying levels of participation. The important thing to note, however, is not just their popularity, but the way these events continued to redefine Civil War commemoration in the South. Starting in the late 1880s, the funereal quality of previous Memorial Day activities had all

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[30] Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 335

[31] "The national flag was displayed in a proportion of fifty to one of the Stars and Bars." "Unveiling of the Statue of General Robert E. Lee at Richmond, Va., May 29, 1890," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 17 (1889) 265.

[32] *Southern Historical Society Papers* 22 (1894), 336.

[33] Foster, "Ghosts of the Confederacy", 288-90.

but ceased. While graves were still decorated, the main events were the speech—now held at a public place, perhaps by a newly erected monument, and usually made by some local or national Confederate hero—and above all, the parade. The Confederate heritage of the white South was thereby transformed from a past subject to be mourned to a living subject to exalt. The veterans, the flags, the parades and the prominent monuments all reminded white Southerners that their Confederate ties lived on. Probably the best example of this change in opinion is the changes made in certain state flags. Georgia (1879), Mississippi (1894), Alabama (1895), Florida (1900) and Arkansas (1913) all changed their flags to pay tribute to the Confederacy, with varying degrees of directness. But despite variations in the strength of the message each flag change sent, all were reaffirming opinions begun in the 1870s: that the Confederacy was not only worth remembering, it was worth celebrating. The "lost cause" had become a vibrant cause, with the living soldier and the unfurled banner in the forefront.

At the same time that Confederate memorials were becoming Confederate jubilees, changes were also happening in the various memorial associations and veterans' groups. In January 1888, the Lee Camp veterans of Virginia launched a campaign that led to the foundation of the Grand Camp of Confederate Veterans, a group that competed with the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia (AANV) for the loyalties of veterans. The Grand Camp had the advantage. Unlike the AANV, it did not limit membership to the veterans of one particular army, but instead invited all Virginia

Confederate veterans to join. In that respect it was comparable to the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the Confederate Survivors' Association (CSA).[34]

This egalitarian approach was carried even further later in the year, when a similar group, under the aegis of the Grand Camp, was permitted to be established in Tennessee. Soon, a drive towards a third, Georgia-based group was made. These actions further differentiated the Grand Camp from the exclusively-Virginian AANV. By the end of the year, those responsible for the foundation of these component groups of the Grand Camp had come to realize the need for a national veterans' organization, much along the lines of the Grand Army of the Republic in the North. On 10 June 1889, the first convention of the newly-chartered United Confederate Veterans was held in New Orleans. The UCV differed from the waning AANV in ways more profound than the former's interstate membership. While both parties had similar agendas in dealing with some issues—the teaching and preserving of Southern history being the best example—the membership and the reasons for the foundation of the two groups were quite different. The AANV was comprised mostly of Virginia's upper-crust, in terms of both wealth and fame. In this regard it was almost like the early GAR, which had varying degrees of membership, thereby lessening the kinship felt by member veterans.[35] Although UCV was not made up of farmers and laborers, its membership were certainly more "plain" in comparison. They were mainly lower echelon professionals, such as small businessmen, insurance agents, or

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[34] The CSA was founded in 1878, but never gained popularity because it never chartered additional chapters outside its Augusta home. The association merged with the United Confederate Veterans in 1895, one year after its founder's death.

[35] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 39-52.

accountants,[36] although in time mostly all professions of the South would be represented. Even the leader of the group, General John B. Gordon, though a corps commander under Lee, was not one of the best known figures in the Confederate armies. Furthermore, Gordon was one of the post-Reconstruction "Georgia Bourbons" of Atlanta, along with General Alfred H. Colquitt and Joseph H. Brown. This placed him outside of the sphere of Early's Virginians, despite the fact that he too was a veteran of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The greatest differences between the two groups were in the reasons they were organized and the reasons veterans joined. The AANV was founded as a clique of unit-specific veterans who organized to better glorify their place in the war and to make heroic their leader, Robert E. Lee. The UCV had no such political aspirations, and was founded to fulfill the need for a united and national fraternal order of Confederate veterans which would allow such men to share their common war experiences. Such was the desire to separate the UCV from politics that the body's periodical, the *Confederate Veteran*, refused to take submissions of a political nature at all. Instead, the journal was made up mainly of recollections, anecdotes and militaria, as well as news of interest to the society and its members. The constitution of the UCV, along with the usual provisions calling for the collection of records, encouragement of impartial history, protection of war mementos, care for the disabled, aid to the needy, and support for widows and orphans, made the UCV a group to strengthen "the ties of friendship that should exist among all

[36] Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 334.

men who have shared common dangers, common sufferings and privations."[37] These views were echoed at the sixth annual reunion in Richmond by ex-Confederate and former Alabama secessionist Jabez L. M. Curry. The members of the UCV met not, he said, "in malice or in mischief, in disaffection, or in rebellion, nor to keep alive sectional hates, nor to awaken revenge for defeat" but "in common love for those who bore the conquered banner."[38]

The UCV turned out to be the right group with the right ideas at the right time. First of all, it was founded at the same time all of America was in the midst of a sort of organizational mania. In the 1880s and 1890s, nearly five hundred social clubs, with a total membership of around six million Americans, were established.[39] This craze was certainly not exclusive to the North. In 1900, for instance, Louisville, Kentucky, alone had over three hundred secret and benevolent societies including forty Odd Fellows lodges, fifty-two lodges of Knights and Ladies of Honor, and twenty-one Councils of Chosen Friends.[40] Some of these societies took historical and genealogical themes to new heights of popularity. The Daughters of the American Revolution was founded at this time, while the rolls of the Grand Army of the Republic swelled to include almost half of all Union veterans. Secondly, the founding of the UCV came at the very time that desire for remembrance among Confederates, and indeed white Southerners as a whole, was

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[37] "The Confederate Veterans," *SHSP*, 19 (1891), 176.

[38] *Address Delivered before the Association of Confederate Veterans* (pamphlet, Richmond, 1896). Quoted in Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 251-2.

[39] Ayes, *Promise of the New South*, 334.

[40] J.C. Van Pelt, "Brief Facts About Louisville," *Lost Cause* 3 (March 1900), 137. Quoted in Durant, "Gently Furled Banner", 179.

reaching a peak. While the United Confederate Veterans never enrolled such a high percentage of its potential members as did the GAR, it quickly assumed an unquestioned role as the most popular of the Southern veterans' groups. The opportunity that the UCV offered veterans—not just the chance to look back with fondness and pride at the most exciting and dangerous times they had experienced, but the chance to do so in the company of their Confederate comrades throughout the South—quickly proved irresistible. In 1892, after only three years of existence, its membership had grown to 172 camps. By 1896, the total had risen to 850, and by 1904 had nearly doubled again to 1565. In the eleven states of the former Confederacy, a full seventy-five percent of counties boasted at least one UCV camp,[41] and a total membership of over 80,000 veterans.[42] UCV veterans also contributed to the swell of support for Confederate celebrations. Not only did the group participate in the major events of the time, its own reunions attracted sizable crowds.

The section-wide popularity of the UCV spurred the growth of other, non-veteran groups dedicated to preserving the memory of the Confederacy. In 1891, Georgia UCV members called upon the various ladies' groups of the state to consolidate into a united auxiliary. This suggestion was brought a step forward in 1893, when it was proposed that a section-wide group be formed using the name "Daughters of the Confederacy," a popular name for Southern ladies' auxiliaries of the time.[43] On 11 September 1894, the

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[41] Foster, "Ghosts of the Confederacy," 225.

[42] Connelly, *Marble Man*, 110.

[43] The name apparently came from a comment by General John Gordon in 1886, when he introduced Varina Anne "Winnie" Davis, the daughter of Jefferson Davis, as "the daughter of the Confederacy." Apparently the first group to bear the name was an association founded in 1890 in

United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) was founded. At first, it was made up only of Tennessee and Georgia groups, but by the end of the year, groups from North and South Carolina had joined the fold. In aims, the UDC was somewhat like the Ladies' Memorial Associations which had formed decades prior. It campaigned widely for funds to build monuments as well as buildings such as veterans' homes and hospitals. The Jefferson Davis monument in Richmond (1899), the Arlington monument (1914), and the Shiloh monument (1917) were a few of the group's most prominent contributions; contributions which required the raising of tens of millions of dollars.

In a similar vein, another pan-Southern women's memorial group, the Confederated Memorial Association of the South, was founded in 1900. Comprised out of many women's groups throughout the section, the association's goal was "to perpetuate the memories and deeds of Southern heroes"[44] through statuary. Also of similar interest, although more restricted in location and objective, the Confederate Memorial Association was founded in Atlanta in 1896, with the goal of creating a mammoth "Battle Abbey." Unlike the other two organizations, this one suffered turmoil and the ravages of interstate politics for almost two decades. Finally, after being shanghaied by Virginians, its project was completed in 1915 in Richmond.[45]

Other groups sought to bestow the joy of participation among those too young to have been veterans. Much of this sentiment arose from the harsh reality that once the last

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Tennessee in order to collect funds to build a Confederate soldiers' home in Nashville. See Mary B. Poppenheim, et.al. *The History of the United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1956).

[44] *Confederate Veteran* 5 (June 1897), 31, quoted in Connelly, *Marble Man*, 111.

[45] Connelly, *Marble Man*, 112; *New York Times*, 30 May 1915.

Civil War veteran died, there would be no group of men left to continue the Confederate gospel. To this end, several chapters of the various veterans' groups, including the Lee Camp and the Confederate Survivors' Association, founded auxiliaries made up of the male descendants of veterans. In 1890, a proposal was made at the UCV's annual meeting to allow sons to join, but nothing came of it. In 1896, with no official sponsorship from the UCV, the United Sons of Confederate Veterans (USCV) was founded, taking members from the earlier auxiliaries and other interested individuals. In 1903, the word "United" was dropped from the group's name so that it would not be confused with the United States Colored Volunteers. Unlike the other groups of non-combatants, the SCV was mainly a fraternal organization, and participated more in discussion than construction. Still, the aims of the founders have been realized, as the SCV, like the UDC, is still in existence close to one hundred years after its founding. Not to leave any group wanting, the Children of the Confederacy was founded as a sort of training grounds for those too young to participate in either the SCV or the UDC. Although it was comparatively less popular, in the 1930s it could boast a membership of 20,000.[46]

The major contribution made by the second wave of Confederate societies was their ability to make the Confederate memory a shared experience for white Southerners. The United Confederate Veterans, true to their name, succeeded in uniting a good portion of Confederate veterans in common, section-wide bonds of fraternity and pride; the civilian groups soon followed suit and succeeded in uniting different generations of white Southerners interested in keeping the Confederate memory alive. Confederate flags, too,

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[46] Raymond S. Tompkins, "Confederate Daughters Stand Guard," *Scribner's Magazine*, July 1932, 35-6.

played an important part in many of these organizations, unlike previous groups. Apart from the Confederate Survivors' Association, already mentioned, the United Confederate Veterans used the battle flag as their standard. The United Daughters of the Confederacy used, and still use, the Stars and Bars in their coat of arms, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans have used both the Last National Flag, and more recently, the battle flag, as their emblem.[47] This shared experience was heightened by the popularity of veterans' reunions and other similar affairs. Once the focus changed from the martyred dead and the lost cause to the Confederacy's living heritage, expressed in its surviving soldiers, its glorified cause, and its fond civilian supporters, the war years transcended their historical bounds to occupy a sort of "nether region." It was history—indeed, it came to be seen as the most glorious episode of history in the section's existence—and yet, it was also a part of the present, a tractable image of Southern patriotism that could be touted, even if many of the celebrants had not even been born when the Confederacy was alive.

It is erroneous to discuss these changes which occurred in the South with regard to the Confederate memory without considering the social conditions of the South at the time. Once the most visible signs of the physical damage the war wrought were removed, and the general economic condition of the South began to increase, it became much easier for white Southerners to take a favorable view of their Confederate experience. Even more important was the retreat of the North from Southern affairs and the changes wrought by numerous discriminatory laws. Even though the Confederacy had lost the war, many of its racist policies, with the exception of slavery, had been reinforced; and

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[47] Forest J. Bowman, "The Unfurled Banners," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 10 (September 1972), 31.

not just by the Southern state governments, but by the federal government, the Supreme Court, and, seemingly, the rest of the nation. The return of Southern self-rule, especially over issues of race, certainly caused a resurgence in Southern regional pride, and, naturally, an increase in the pride felt for the Confederacy, the greatest example of Southern sectionalism. This pride manifested itself in different ways: an increase in the construction of monuments as well as a change in their focus, a change in the nature of Confederate memorial events from commemorations to celebrations and a subsequent boost in their popularity, the popularity of veterans' groups with the UCV being the most significant example, and, above all, the display of Confederate flags—a completely new practice in the postwar South. All of these different manifestations then combined with prior movements such as that of the "Lost Cause" to produce a truly new Southern view of the Civil War. The war was no longer a depressing and perhaps shameful episode of history; it was an event white Southerners could take pride in, and which lived on in its veterans and banners. But if the white inhabitants of the South believed that such displays to their short-lived nation would be allowed to continue without any Northern censure, they would be quickly be proven wrong.

Chapter Four

Contention and Conciliation

At the same time the memorial movements of the South and North were beginning to emerge from the doldrums of the early 1870s, a desire for post-war sectional reconciliation arose among certain citizens of both sections. In the span of a little more than a decade, from the middle 1870s to the middle 1880s, these wishes came true to a limited degree. Union and Confederate veterans increasingly came together for national commemorations, and, later, for "Blue-Gray" reunions. But this initial time of compromise was short-lived. By the late 1880s, the Confederate memorial movement had reached its peak, and the flags of the Confederacy had become the movement's most visible symbols. These symbols raised the ire of the ultra-nationalist Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), the association of Union veterans who had also taken on the task of being the nation's color guard. For another decade, the flags of the Confederacy would be at the heart of a debate between North and South. The Grand Army saw the flags of the Confederacy as emblems of treason, and would have nothing to do with reconciliation unless the banners were furled. White Southerners refused. It would not be until the Spanish-American War and the process of time quickened the rate of sectional compromise that the emblems of the Confederacy were recognized by those in the North as valued symbols of American history. What this compromise meant for race relations was never considered.

The first movements designed at encouraging reconciliation between the North

and South arose at the same time the Republican North physically withdrew from the affairs of the South. The events which first put these desires into action were the celebrations and commemorations surrounding the centennial of the American Revolution in the middle and late 1870s. Even before any actual actions were taken, the periodicals and newspapers of the day openly hoped that the upcoming observances would afford an opportunity to erase sectional divisions. In 1875, an editor of *Scribner's* wrote that the entire nation should see to it "that the Centennial heals all the old wounds, reconciles all the old differences, and furnishes the occasion for such a reunion of the great American nationality as shall make our celebration an expression of fraternal good will among all sections and all states."[1] Similar sentiments were expressed by *Harper's* when the editors of that magazine said:

> The centennial year also appeals to the national sentiment in the hearts of those in the Southern States who have cherished more pride in the state than in the nation. They will feel the force and depth of a genuine national emotion. They will see that the glory of the Revolution was a united, not a divided glory.[2]

As predicted, these events provided the opportunity for some ground-breaking inter-sectional reconciliation. The first occurred in the spring of 1875 during the commemoration of the battles of Lexington and Concord, where such sentiments found willing proponents in two men, Governor Daniel H. Chamberlain of South Carolina and Union veteran General Francis Bartlett. Chamberlain reminded his Massachusetts

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[1] *Scribner's Monthly* 20 (1875), 510.

[2] "Bunker Hill," *Harper's Weekly*, 3 July 1875, 535.

audience about the bond which existed between the two states; his Northern counterpart asserted in turn that "the hearts of the two states beat again in unison."[3] The latter sentiment may be called into question by the careful observer, however, as Chamberlain was a carpetbagger originally from Massachusetts. In comparison, General Bartlett's views were more heartfelt, being devoid of the political cloying which characterized the governor's speech, as well as unique in their tone of forgiveness. He claimed that, as an American, he was "as proud of the men who charged so bravely with Pickett's division on our lines at Gettysburg as I am of the men who so bravely met and repulsed them there." He also said that the sons of those who fought for conscience in 1775 should be the first to forgive those who did the same in 1863.[4] At a time when certain Northern periodicals still vented at the traitorous nature of the South,[5] Bartlett's opinions may have been unique, but only in their degree of leniency. Two months after this display, at the centennial observances of the Battle of Bunker Hill, the first open reunion of Union and Confederate veterans occurred. Companies of veterans from Virginia and South Carolina, including Confederate General Fitzhugh Lee, attended alongside Union veterans. Both groups of men shared an evening of "peace and good will" in which both sides affirmed the "one-ness" of the nation. The next day, the Confederates joined a procession of about 50,000 who marched through the streets of Boston to the Bunker Hill monument in

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[3] Paul H. Buck, *The Road to Reunion: 1865-1900* (New York, Vintage Books, 1959),140.

[4] Ibid.

[5] See, for instance, "Decoration Day," *Harper's Weekly*, 12 June 1875, 474.

Charlestown.[6]

While acts such as this were rare in the late 1870s, by the early 1880s the quantity of such demonstrations had increased dramatically. In 1881, during Mardi Gras celebrations, New York and Boston cadet companies visited New Orleans. Not only did both groups parade, but the Boston group visited Greenwood Cemetery and placed a floral Union shield on one of the cemetery's monuments to Confederate dead.[7] This act made such an impression that the 19 March issue of *Harper's Weekly* featured a symbolic representation of the event, depicting a friendly embrace of New York and New Orleans cadets, to the delight of Uncle Sam, all taking place under a monument marked with the words "No North! No South! But the UNION!"[8] *Harper's* echoed these sentiments a week later in an article called "A New South." This article suggested that the views of Southerners were becoming less extreme by quoting the speeches of prominent spokesmen who decried slavery and praised abolition. Once these views were taken up by Southerners in general, the magazine promised, "the South will disappear as a factor from politics, like the North and the West."[9] Yet again, another cartoon dramatized the piece; this one featured two old veterans, Southern and Northern, in a parade led by "Industry," while a banner proclaiming "Prosperity" fluttered from the nearby Capitol dome.[10] In October, a gathering celebrating the centennial of the battle of Yorktown presented a

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[6] Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 140-1.

[7] *New Orleans Picayune*, 26 February 1881.

[8] *Harper's Weekly*, 19 March 1881, 188.

[9] "A New South," *Harper's Weekly*, 26 March 1881, 194.

[10] *Harper's Weekly*, 26 March 1881, 193.

similar sight, and similar reconciliatory hopes, as the Bunker Hill gathering six years earlier; it was unique only in the fact that it took place in Virginia, former Confederate territory.[11]

Of greater interest are the incidents which deal more directly with the Civil War itself. In the 1880s, "Blue-Gray" reunions, in which the subject for the reunion was the commemoration of a Civil War event, grew in number and importance. The GAR itself participated in nearly two-dozen such reunions between 1881 and 1887, including a formally endorsed reunion in Vicksburg.[12] In 1887 and in 1888, prominent gatherings of Union and Confederate veterans were held at Gettysburg. The 1887 event was highlighted by a meeting between the Union "Philadelphia Brigade" and veterans of General George Pickett's ill-fated division, both former opponents in the battle.[13] A year later, during the quarter-century anniversary in 1888, Confederate General Dan Sickles proclaimed his belief in the unity of America by announcing to his audience that in America "there are no victors, no vanquished."[14] Perhaps the greatest show of solidarity offered by the sections at this time, however, involved the not-infrequent return of captured battle standards, nearly always from South to North. This trend was started when the citizens of Charleston, South Carolina returned to Massachusetts the standard of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, lost on its assault on Fort Wagner. The 54th was a black

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[11] "The Yorktown Celebration," *Harper's Weekly*, 29 October 1881, 730.

[12] Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1992), 190.

[13] See "The Blue and the Gray on the Fourth," *Harper's Weekly*, 9 July 1887, 483.

[14] Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 270.

regiment, and while the Confederacy had bitterly resented the use of such troops,[15] the regiment's commander, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, had become a Massachusetts hero. The voluntary ceding of this trophy was applauded in Boston,[16] and was quite a symbolic move when one considers the depth of feeling on both sides, in regards to the regiment. Such actions increased in the early 1880s. In 1883, Virginia cadets returned the standard of the 164th New York Regiment, captured at Alexandria,[17] and in 1887 Alabamans returned the flag of the 16th Regiment of Connecticut Volunteers,[18] prompting the editor of a Southern journal to request that on the occasion of former Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner's birthday, "every captured flag in this section be returned to the North."[19] But while the ceremonial return of Union standards caused little strife in either North or South, problems arising from the use and return of Confederate bunting soon led to the first controversy to surround the flags of the Confederacy.

Before this debate can be entered into, some words must first be said about the nature of the Grand Army of the Republic, its role in Northern society, and how it compared to the many Confederate memorial groups. In short, the GAR was like the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia (AANV), the Southern Historical Society,

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[15] Among Confederate soldiers, black units were perhaps the most detested in the Union army; black Union prisoners were often enslaved and sometimes executed by their Confederate captors. Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: Meridian, 1991), 155-159; 201-206.

[16] Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 139-40.

[17] "The Restoration of a Flag," *Harper's Weekly*, 14 July 1883, 435.

[18] "The Story of a Flag," *Harper's Weekly*, 24 September 1887, 683.

[19] "Alabama and Connecticut," *Harper's Weekly*, 1 October 1887, 703. Although Sumner was a great foe of slavery, after the war he cited Roman precedent in his belief that trophies captured in a civil

and the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) combined, in that it had political, fraternal, historical and patriotic aims. In the furthering of each of these purposes, however, the GAR was more successful than any of its Southern counterparts. In its first decade, the GAR was like the AANV in its exclusive and political nature. Unlike the AANV, however, the GAR was a powerful force in politics, which supported its friends, denounced its enemies, vigorously supported issues of interest to Union veterans, and above all, held powerful offices.[20] Later, in the 1880s, when the GAR became more of a fraternal group, it succeeded in attracting a greater share of Union veterans than the most popular Confederate group, the UCV, did of Confederate veterans. Finally, the GAR developed a patriotic ideology and a desire for Civil War remembrance which at least equalled in vigour anything the Lost Causers produced.

Even the briefest look at this ideology shows that, in retrospect, a clash with the rising Southern memorial movements was nearly inevitable. The men of the GAR saw the Civil War in one exclusive way. The Union, which fought to hold the nation together against the treasonous actions of a Southern slavocracy, was unquestionably in the right. The Confederacy, while a valiant foe, was undoubtedly in the wrong in its attempt to rebel, and was defeated because of it. As one GAR member said, "those who wore one uniform and fought under one flag, fought for their country and were right, while those who wore the other uniform and fought under the other banner, fought against their country and were wrong, and no sentimental nor commercial efforts to efface these

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war should neither be displayed nor preserved. *New York Times* 21 February 1888.

[20] See Mary R. Dearing, *Veterans in Politics: The Story of the G.A.R.* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).

radical differences should be encouraged by any true patriot."[21] This antagonism was only extended to the rebellious ideal that the Confederacy presented. GAR men had no problems in viewing individual Southerners, including Confederate veterans, as fellow Americans, so long as they were willing to discard any allegiances to their short-lived nation.

The GAR not only defended their view of the Civil War, they also rose to the position of the supreme defenders and proponents of American patriotism in general. Until the turn of the century, GAR men could be found participating in almost every patriotic pressure group and movement. Much of their efforts focused on schools, and what they saw as the proper training of the next generation of Americans. Not only did they influence the writing and acceptance of history texts dealing with the Civil War, a trait common to many veterans groups of the South as well, they also encouraged the learning of the Star Spangled Banner, the Pledge of Allegiance (itself largely a creation of the GAR) and the Declaration of Independence, as well as the use of military drill. The GAR is also credited with instituting the practise of standing and singing for the playing of the national anthem. The American flag, however, held a special place in the activities of the GAR. To its members, respect paid to the Stars and Stripes was akin to respect to the nation itself, and a worthy and necessary deed. In 1899, for instance, the Commander-in-Chief of the GAR told a national encampment that schoolchildren should revere the flag as much as the Israelites did the Ark of the Covenant.[22] Until the 1890s, the sight of

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[21] *Journals of the Annual Sessions, Thirteenth Encampment*, 58, quoted in Buck, *The Road to Reunion*, 246-7.

[22] McConnell, *Glorious Contentment*, 228.

an American flag flying over a schoolhouse was a rarity. By 1897, thanks to a drive made by the GAR, the flying of the Stars and Stripes over schoolhouses and other public buildings had become, in the words of a GAR report on the issue, "almost a universal custom" and, in many states, law.[23] The GAR also pushed for the creation of a "Flag Day" holiday, solely to honour the flag. In 1916, it became a national holiday, nearly twenty years after the first states began recognising it. But despite the GAR's desire for a national unity produced by this fervent patriotism, their uncompromising views of the Civil War, combined with their unyielding association of loyalty with national symbols, could not help but cause a conflict with the South.

Perhaps the first, and certainly the most significant, conflict to erupt over flags happened in 1887, and involved a controversy over the fate of captured Confederate battle standards held in Northern cities. As has been explained before, it was not uncommon at that time for flags to be returned. The vast majority of such transfers, however, involved Union banners headed North, and usually under the auspices of private groups such as veterans' associations. In June 1887, R.C. Drum, Adjutant-General of the War Department, and, ironically, a GAR member himself, thought that the time had come for all standards to be returned to their respective states, North and South. President Grover Cleveland acquiesced, and letters were quickly dispatched to state governors, asking for the return of captured battle standards held in their states. The response from the South was mainly positive—after all, it was the South which had done most of the flag returning in the first place, and many Southerners saw little need to hold onto such

[23] Ibid., 229-30; Dearing, *Veterans in Politics*, 472.

trophies.[24] The Northern response, however, was enormous and hostile, and the GAR was at the forefront. Cleveland himself was hardly in the Grand Army's good books, having fallen into the group's disfavour twice earlier by failing to make a speech during a visit to Gettysburg, and by going fishing on Memorial Day.[25] On this occasion, the GAR pulled no punches. Commander-in-Chief General Lucius Fairchild damned the federal resolution by crying "may God palsy the brain that conceived it, and may God palsy the tongue that dictated it!"[26] Former Union General and Radical Republican Benjamin F. Butler said that "if we return our flags captured from them, I think the next thing they will ask will be that we restore the slaves we captured from them,"[27] while the New York Republican club proposed that the captured Confederate flags remain in the North as "mute teachers of posterity that the war for disunion was wrong."[28] *Harper's*, however, seemed to view the return of flags as consistent with its oft-expressed editorial desire for sectional reconciliation, and therefore had few good things to say about the entire controversy. The

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[24] Jefferson Davis said, in a letter to the *Baltimore Sun*, that the South "has manifested no desire to have possession of the flags lost in battle: their value departed when they were surrendered." He also saw the return of captured flags as good, as it advanced feelings of national fraternity, and, as he said, "there should be no triumph for victory won in a civil war." *Baltimore Sun*, 30 June 1887. Why the South sent flags to the North in disproportionate numbers, especially when the North held many times more Confederate banners than the South held Union banners, is a fact contemporary observers do not explain. It is most likely due to the fact that Southerners ceded flags to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States. While the reception of Confederate flags from Northern states was appreciated, it was something which could not, in the climate of the times, be demanded. Furthermore, the display of Confederate flags in the South was a practice which did not really become widespread until the late 1880s. After the flag scandal of 1887, the practice of returning flags stopped.

[25] Dearing, *Veterans in Politics*, 343.

[26] Ibid., 344.

[27] *New York Times*, 19 June 1887.

[28] Ibid., 23 June 1887.

GAR, especially, was singled out for insulting President Cleveland and for "fostering sectional hatred and attempting to rekindle for party purpose the passions of the war."[29]

In the end, Cleveland realized that his order was both wildly unpopular and outside of his authority, and abandoned it. Drum was left to take the blame, and was accused of misleading Cleveland into believing the flags in question were decaying Union banners left to rot in the cellars of the War Department, and not Confederate banners as well.[30] The incident best shows the tenacious views of the GAR in regard to the Confederacy and its emblems. For the national government to force the return of conquered battle standards to the Southern states meant, in the eyes of the GAR, that these states were the rightful owners of the flags; and if the Southern states were the rightful owners, that meant that they were the direct heirs to the Confederate legacy. To the GAR and like-minded organisations, however, there were no heirs to the Confederacy—the Confederacy was dead and its former members were once again part of the United States. For former Confederates to take pride in their rebellious past was bad enough; for United States officials to give Southerners an excuse to glorify their seditious past was akin to sedition itself.

The 1887 incident was certainly not an isolated one. As the 1890s progressed, a sharp divergence in opinion began to form between the two major veterans' groups, the GAR and the UCV, with the major subject of dissension being Confederate symbols. This

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[29] "The Grand Army of the Republic," *Harper's Weekly*, 23 July 1887, 518; "The Grand Army and Politics," ibid., 30 July 1887, 534-5; "The Silver Lining of the Cloud," ibid., 2 July 1887, 466.

[30] *New York Times*, 17 June 1887.

was a new debate, mainly due to the fact that the popularity of Confederate flags among white Southerners did not begin to manifest itself to any great degree until the late 1880s. By the early 1890s, the average Confederate celebration would have certainly been incomplete without Confederate emblems, either the tattered standards carried by veterans or the newly manufactured bunting held by civilians. But to the GAR, such displays were far more blasphemous actions than Cleveland's controversial battle standard decision. In the tenets of the GAR, the American flag was sacred, the Confederate flag profane. The glorification of the latter could only come at the expense of the former. To the GAR, Southerners who chose to worship the Confederacy in such an overt way not only glorified a rebellious society, they also besmirched the existing Union, and, naturally, all Union veterans dead or alive. It was to some an intensely personal affront which deserved to be fought.

In 1890, one of the first major salvos was fired by the GAR when it openly urged an ultimately unsuccessful Congressional resolution which would have prohibited the display of any flag other than the Stars and Stripes.[31] This motion was met with predictable hostility from Confederate groups. The Lee Camp of Confederate Veterans, whose annual meeting in Richmond came soon after the GAR's resolution, responded by refusing, by unanimous decision, to send a committee of representatives to a proposed "Blue-Gray" reunion. Said one member, "Confederate veterans might feel out of place celebrating with men who have such venom in their hearts."[32] Another member, Major

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[31] *New York Times*, 30 August 1890.

[32] Ibid.

Alexander A. Archer, stated that although he was as loyal to the Stars and Stripes "as any citizen of the North, before he would cease to love the old flag under which he fought, or cease to venerate the memory of Lee, Jackson, and all the gallant leaders of the Lost Cause, he would be willing to take up his gun and fight again."[33] The GAR's beliefs were reaffirmed a year later, when St. Louis GAR men refused to attend a ball held by the Daughters of the Confederacy, for the benefit of a home for Confederate veterans. The beneficiary of the ball was not the problem, as GAR men had donated to the cause. Instead, the objection was to the Daughters' invitations, upon which a Confederate flag was printed. Said Colonel T.B. Rogers, Assistant Adjutant General of the GAR, "we don't object to the ex-Confederate home . . . many of us have chipped in for that purpose. We object to the flag."[34]

This objection was given its most representative voice a few months later. In February 1892, it was reported to General Palmer, Commander-in-Chief of the GAR, that GAR men visiting Atlanta had marched in a procession in which Confederate flags were carried by Confederate veterans. Palmer responded with a dictum proclaiming that, thereafter, no GAR branch would be allowed to take part in such activities. He stated:

> A rebel officer . . . has as much right to bear the traitor's flag through the streets of a loyal city as he has to wear the traitor's garb. It is against the terms of surrender, and an act of hostility against the Government of the United States . . . . The Grand Army of the Republic has invited fraternization, but it has never agreed, never consented, and never will, that its members wearing the badge and uniform of the order should march under anything that has the

[33] *Richmond Dispatch*, 30 August 1890.

[34] *New York Times*, 27 November 1891.

> semblance of a Confederate flag. . . We are a united country and are a united people, and no flag should be carried that will tend to arouse a feeling of animosity or revenge in the mind of the young generation of the South.[35]

As a result, the number of "Blue-Gray" reunions declined significantly, as neither the GAR nor the Confederate groups were able to reconcile their differences. The Confederates largely insisted on marching under their banners, while the GAR steadfastly prevented such displays from occurring, and a compromise simply could not be found.

Indeed, such were the opinions of many in the GAR that their condemnations did not end with flag displays. In May 1895, Joseph Thayer, the Boston Commander of the GAR, protested against government involvement in a monument to Confederate dead in Chicago. Not only had the property been donated by the Federal Government, a cannon was also provided for decoration of the monument, and the entire dedication was to take place on Memorial Day. Thayer saw the move as treasonous, and said that "the blood of our martyred Lincoln, of our noble Grant, cries out against this blasphemy" and the desecration of the "Grand Army Sabbath."[36] The dedication was performed nonetheless.

Despite attitudes such as these, a few significant inter-sectional reunions did occur, although not always under the official sponsorship of the major veterans' groups. From 18 to 20 September 1895, for instance, a large crowd of perhaps 40,000 veterans, both Confederate and Union, assembled for the dedication of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. It must be noted, however, that both the GAR and

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[35] Ibid., 9 February 1892.

[36] Ibid., 13 May 1895.

the UCV were represented officially only by their respective presidents; members of either group attending did so, apparently, as private citizens.[37] For every instance of reunion such as this one, however, there occurred more than one instance of disagreement and disunion. In early 1896, only a few months after the Chickamauga/Chattanooga reunion, proposed plans for a July 4th "Blue-Gray" parade in New York were dashed. Apparently, organisers had hoped for a parade featuring Union and Confederate veterans marching in their respective uniforms, and under their respective banners. Naturally, the GAR rejected the proposal. Commander-in-Chief General Ivan F. Walker echoed the objections of his predecessors by stating that the "sooner those who wore the gray shall cease trying to symbolize the 'lost cause' by flag or uniform, and shall refrain from representing themselves as a distinct part of the people, the sooner will a full realization of patriotism and fraternity be brought about."[38] These views were echoed by GAR Commanders from Pennsylvania and Ohio. On the Southern side, the dominant feeling was one of resignation. If the GAR demanded that the Confederate veterans keep their uniforms and their flags out of the parade, then the Confederate veterans would not bother showing up. This is exactly what happened, and the parade, like countless other proposed "Blue-Gray" events throughout the 1890s, did not occur.

What the GAR failed to realise was that, despite the rebellious posturing the use

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[37] Whether this was due to protest, or simply because the groups had held their official reunions for the year elsewhere is unknown. Nonetheless, a spirit of brotherhood was in evidence, as seen by telling quotes such as by one speaker who observed how the veterans of the Blue and Gray were now reuniting "under one flag, all lovers of one country." Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 270-1.

[38] *New York Times*, 27 February 1896.

of Confederate flags implied, the majority of white Southerners of the time were just as loyal to the United States as their Northern brethren. In every triumphant parade or monument raising ceremony in the South, no matter how many Confederate flags were in evidence, the Stars and Stripes always held a prominent position, if not the lead. Most Confederate veterans and Southern sectionalists of the age, no matter how fervently they touted the Confederate achievement and the rightness of the "Lost Cause," were careful to footnote their opinions with words of respect and loyalty for the American nation in which they resided. This was more than lip-service provided to assuage the fears of Northern reactionaries such as the GAR. White Southerners of the 1890s were as patriotic as Americans in other sections, and were also very much aware of the benefits which American citizenship increasingly brought, in both the economic and social realms. The economic hardships of the 1860s and 70s were disappearing and the "Redeemers" were quickly saving the South from the "evils" of Reconstruction. White Southerners were regaining control over race issues, and were prospering to boot. Confederate symbols, then, were not used to strengthen innermost feelings of hostility towards national government. While they did reinforce a sectional identity, it was an identity which was seen as a part of a national whole. The fact that the Confederacy fought against the nation which white Southerners were now citizens of was a moot point. For the most part, they celebrated and commemorated the Civil War as a historical event of great importance and pride. The secessionist ideology that had led the South to war in the first place, though neither ignored nor criticized, was no longer considered relevant. To the members of the GAR and those of like mind, however, the Confederacy was made up of rebels, and those who paid respect to the former could only be the latter.

While time would eventually cause such harsh ideas to fade, one event, the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in April 1898, was a timely happening which probably did more to unite the sections than any other single occurrence. The war provided the South with its first real opportunity to prove its loyalty to the rest of the nation. Indeed, as if this goal was the main objective, it was in the South where the first mobilisation of civilian volunteers took place. Furthermore, two of the four civilian major-generals appointed were Confederate veterans—Fitzhugh Lee and "Fighting Joe" Wheeler. Southerners could truthfully proclaim that, in this battle, "Confederate veterans and their sons will be seen upholding the national honor and guarding the country's safety with all the steadiness and resolution that characterized them in the early sixties."[39] One Detroit newspaper boasted that "nothing short of an archaeological society will be able to locate Mason and Dixon's after this."[40] When the first American death of the war, a white soldier from North Carolina, was announced, newspapers North and South joined in tribute. The *Atlanta Constitution* proclaimed that the soldier's death "completes the work of reconciliation which commenced at Appomattox."[41] The unity that resulted from the brief war was greater than the superficial and sometimes maudlin editorialising provided by newspapermen. The war brought the white men of the North and the South into contact, and gave them the opportunity to realise that they were not so far apart after all. But above all, it revealed to many Northern doubters that the South, though

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[39] *Richmond Times*; quoted in Buck, *Road to Reunion*, 319.

[40] Quoted in Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 329.

[41] Ibid., 332.

possessing a strong sectional identity and pride, truly thought of itself as a part of the nation. No matter how much the Confederacy was celebrated and regaled, the true patriotic spirit of the South would not be compromised.

This greater social understanding reached by the North and the South in the first decade of the twentieth century significantly changed the ideals on both sides, though not the celebrations. The GAR continued its national campaigns, although the advancing age of its members greatly curtailed its degree of political activism, but the spectres of the once-blasphemous Confederate emblems and memorials were only rarely mentioned. Indeed, in 1904, a Congressional bill which called for the return of captured Confederate flags to their respective states—much the same as the bill which had been so fiercely attacked by the GAR only seventeen years earlier—succeeded in passing with little opposition.[42] In 1911, Congress followed up with the official substitution of the words "Civil War" for "War for the Suppression of Rebellion" to describe the 1861-65 hostilities. The resolution passed unanimously.[43] At the same time, Confederate veterans and other white Southerners continued to celebrate and commemorate the Civil War as they had before, Confederate emblems included.

Probably the most cogent example of the new unity occurred in 1913, with the great "Blue-Gray" reunion held during the 50th anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg. Over 50,000 aged veterans attended, with about a quarter of these being Confederate,

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[42] See "Confederate States' Flags," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 32 (1904), 195-200; "Returned Confederate States' Flags," Ibid., 33 (1905), 297-305.

[43] *New York Times*, 2 February 1911.

making the gathering perhaps the largest such reunion ever assembled.[44] Union and Confederate veterans swapped tales and jokes on the old battlefield, the strains of "Dixie" and "The Star-Spangled Banner" were heard at a nearly equal frequency, and the flags of the Confederacy mingled with the Stars and Stripes, with little protest from anyone. Throughout the week-long affair, countless speeches reaffirmed the sanctity of the past and the values of reconciliation. General Bennett H. Young, Commander-in-Chief of the UCV, expressed his relief that Union veterans did not ask Southerners "to express apologies or regrets . . . our past is dearer to us than our lives."[45] President Wilson himself gave a speech on Independence Day, praising both sides of the battle, without actually making mention of what the entire war was fought over.[46] Above all, mention was constantly made about the greatness of the gathering, the camaraderie on both sides, the national unity that had developed, and how a sight like this would never be seen again.

Of all of these things mentioned, the last was perhaps the truest. In the twentieth century, Civil War veterans' groups had more to fear from advancing age than they had from each other. Many significant reunions and gatherings occurred after 1913, including a UCV gathering in Washington, but attendance, both of veterans and spectators, lessened each year. Nonetheless, the reconciliation of opinions concerning the Civil War maintained itself. The First World War, though not as significant an event in the process as the Spanish-American War, further helped to cement the bonds of the white North and

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[44] For descriptions of the events, see *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 June 1913-5 July 1913.

[45] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 July 1913.

[46] Ibid., 5 July 1913.

South. In 1920, when a Republican Representative from Illinois called Confederates "traitors," he was considered a man "alone in a wilderness of his own creation."[47] Nine years later, Congress passed a resolution once more modifying the official name of the conflict, reducing "Civil War" to the even more conciliatory "War Between the States."[48] And although a 1935 "Blue-Gray" reunion in Washington was scuttled due to a temporary resurrection of the old GAR rule demanding the furling of Confederate flags, the 1938 75th anniversary celebration of Gettysburg went even more smoothly than the 1913 one—Confederate flags included—although the attendance was but a fraction of the 1913 total.[49] This event, however, was the last hurrah for the men of the Civil War generation. Any rhetoric praising the unity of the nation meant little to the typical American of the 1930s. The United States had been unquestionably unified for so long it was absurd to speak of it as a wonderful thing—it was merely a simple fact. The Confederate flag was, to most white Northerners, no longer an object of treason or scorn, but simply another emblem from America's past.

The reconciliation that went on between North and South in the first decades of the twentieth century was, however, only concerned with whites. While white Southerners were welcomed back into the fold by their Northern kin, the status of black Southerners worsened. Once the North and the Republican party eliminated their concern

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[47] *New York Times*, 19 May 1920.

[48] Ibid., 3 March 1929.

[49] Close to 2000 veterans attended, which is still a remarkable total considering that the youngest veterans present would have been in their nineties at the time. See *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 June 1938-4 July 1938; *Washington Post*, 1-2 July 1938.

for the welfare of blacks, segregation, the "Jim Crow" laws, and political disenfranchisement all continued unabated. Even more frightening was the rise in radical racism during the late 1890s and early 1900s after a short period of dormancy. Like the previous spate of lynching which accompanied the radical rise of the 1890s, this phase was dominated by the anti-black riot. Between 1898 and 1906, several major riots broke out in Southern centres, including Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898, New Orleans in 1900, and, above all, Atlanta in 1906.[50] Such actions made real the assertion a Richmond newspaper made that the "closer the North and the South get together by [the Spanish-American War], the harder [blacks] will have to fight to maintain a footing."[51] Indeed, it is a cruel irony that the one event which succeeded more than any in affirming the place of the white Southerner in America, the Spanish-American War, did nothing to ease the acceptance of black Americans, even though their contribution to the war effort was nearly as great.[52] In the First World War, the role of blacks was downgraded before they even got a chance to prove their mettle—most black volunteers were placed in segregated "labor battalions."

Likewise, the historical status of American blacks was significantly reduced, and began to be washed out by the happy glow of reconciliation between the white North and the white South. It was generally held that the ending of slavery was a good thing.

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[50] For more complete discussions of these riots, see Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 189-223.

[51] Quoted in Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 332.

[52] Nearly a quarter of American troops in the Spanish-American War were blacks. Although the first civilian volunteers were from the white South, the first mobilized troops were black soldiers serving in the West.

Historian William A. Dunning and his followers, however, reduced Reconstruction to an evil and fruitless attempt to raise the position of undeserving and uncivilized blacks. Increasingly, reconciliation caused the war to be seen not as a battle fought over ideals and visions, but as a kind of sporting event in which the cause was immaterial and the result superficial—the only things that mattered were the quality of the effort expended, and the ability of the contestants to come together afterward and bask in the shared experience of competition. Black Americans seemed not to belong, either in the past or the present. They had followed the advice of Booker T. Washington and had, as one historian has said, "cast down their buckets where they were" but now "the water came up salty, bitter, and foul."[53]

In the 1880s and 1890s, the flags of the Confederacy, and indeed, the entire movement which the flags were symbols of, faced what would be their greatest challenge for nearly seventy-five years. When white Southerners flew Confederate flags during the many celebrations of the Confederate memory beginning in the late 1880s, they did so mainly for reasons of sectional and historical pride; a pride buoyed by a contemporary increase in Southern economic recovery, and the return of white, racist, Southern political power. The view of the Confederate memory as a sacred trust was a legacy of the earlier memorial movements and Lost Cause writers. This symbolism was furthered in the 1880s and 1890s, when the Confederacy's celebrants made their contemporary South, as well as their descendant's South, both the keepers of this trust as well as its embodiment. But the sectional pride so vividly demonstrated by white Southerners did not compromise their

[53] Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 220.

feelings of loyalty and patriotism. This fact was the ultimate failing of the GAR campaign against Confederate flags—a campaign which relied on imagined implications and fallacious assumptions. Time, aided by the evidence provided in the Spanish-American War, succeeded in erasing the hateful lines drawn by the Civil War. The Confederate heritage celebrated so lustily in the South became entwined, unashamedly, with the heritage of the rest of the nation, and the flags of the Confederacy took their place alongside the emblems of the United States. Such reconciliation did not come without cost, however. The Southern blacks, who suffered the worst under the Confederacy, and whose plight indirectly caused the Civil War itself, were marginalized and demeaned in history as in contemporary life. The forces which brought the nation together to celebrate the shared pasts of North and South had neglected one of the most important players. This fact bothered few white Americans as the nation moved into the modern age. Not only was the cleansed legacy of the Confederacy gladly accepted as a proud part of American history, it would soon become more popular than ever before.

Chapter Five

The Popular Icon

Beginning in the 1910s and 1920s, interest in celebrating the Confederacy declined significantly. In the 1930s, however, a revival took place. An increased concern with American history, especially that of the antebellum South and the Confederacy, combined with a boom in Southern writing to produce a greater national interest in the section than had been seen for generations. But this revival did not bring with it a commensurate increase in the familiar Confederate devotionals. Instead, it brought with it changes in the way both the South and the nation viewed Confederate history. In the 1940s, these changes conspired with events and attitudes of the time to alter the way the Confederate flag was used and viewed. In the late 1940s, its use as a regional symbol during sporting events and by the pro-Southern, anti-civil rights "Dixiecrats" transformed it from a purely historical symbol to a contemporary banner. This exposure led to an unprecedented increase in the flag's popularity, as a nation-wide fetish for flying the Confederate flag developed. This "craze" led to yet another alteration in the way the flag could be viewed. It could symbolize the Confederacy, which it always had; Southern sectionalism; rebellion, either against established society or established politics; or it could be little more than a colorful decoration. By the end of the 1950s, it seemed to have abandoned the exclusive realm of history to become another symbol in the lexicon of American popular culture.

While Civil War nostalgia was a popular pastime of the 1890s and early 1900s, its

attraction among white Southerners untouched by the conflict could only last so long. The length of time since the war's end, the rapidly shrinking population of living veterans, and a general lessening of interest in the Civil War in the 1910s and 1920s combined to reduce popular interest in Confederate celebrations to a level not seen since the "doldrums" of the 1870s. Nonetheless, the major proponents of the Confederate memory persevered. The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) continued to erect new monuments and veterans' hospitals, and generally stand up for the section, while the United Confederate Veterans (UCV) continued to draw noticeable crowds to its annual reunions. In 1923, for instance, the annual UCV reunion in New Orleans attracted 15,000 attendants.[1] In all of these cases, as with similar events which preceded them, the flags of the Confederacy received great use. The 1923 UCV reunion featured a tableau of children dressed in Civil War costume, carrying the Stars and Stripes and the Stars and Bars;[2] while at a parade later in the week, "Confederate flags and red and white balloons decorated the automobiles, filled during the parade with the South's heroes."[3] In 1934, it was noted that a meeting of the UDC began with a ritual which included a pledge to the flag of the United States and a salute to a Confederate flag.[4] The late 1920s also saw a small revival in the return of captured flags, with the majority going from private organizations in the North to the Southern states where they originated.[5] The fact that

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[1] *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 12 April 1923.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 14 April 1923.

[4] *New York Times*, 22 November 1934.

[5] *New York Times*, 16 October 1927, 8 January 1928, 13 January 1928.

North-South transfers outnumbered South-North transfers is interesting, as it was a reverse of the trend of the 1870s and 80s. These returns best point out the spirit of reconciliation present in the United States, as well as the greater acceptance of the Confederate flag. In 1928, the *New York Times* went so far as to call the returned Southern flags "treasured relics of idealism and courage."[6] Even a past commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, the group which had fought vehemently against all Confederate symbols, praised the action.[7] But despite the length of time since Confederate emblems were first used in public events, their role did not change. The flags were flaunted during memorial occasions and celebrations, but rarely, if ever, seen at other times. They were living reminders to contemporary white Southerners of their sacred past and their role in preserving and honoring it, but they still remained a symbol of that same past.

The 1930s, however, marked an upswing in Southern sectional pride as well as interest in the Civil War and antebellum periods. This upswing was due to a variety of reasons. As with the 1870s, anniversaries of events surrounding the Revolutionary War played a small role. 1932 marked the bicentennial of George Washington's birth, and as the date approached, interest in his life rose accordingly. Along with the interest in Washington came a side interest in the other "great men" of Virginia, especially one of Washington's relatives, Robert E. Lee. In 1929, the ancestral home of the Lees at Stratford was purchased by the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation for half a million

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[6] Ibid., 14 January 1928.

[7] Ibid., 13 January 1928.

dollars, in order to better "perpetrate the ideals and characters of the Lees."[8] In 1928, a dedication was made at the partly-finished Stone Mountain Memorial in Georgia, which was to feature representations of Lee, "Stonewall" Jackson and Jefferson Davis. Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, had earlier called it "what the Egyptians tried to do, and the Grecians wanted to do; neither had the time nor the place."[9] At the time of the dedication, the *New York Times* called it "a wonder of the world."[10]

An outpouring of writing in the 1930s concerning Southern themes, both historical and fictional, also added to this interest. Novelists such as Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren and William Faulkner, as well as the contributors to such magazines as the *Double Dealer* from New Orleans, *The Reviewer* in Richmond, and *The Fugitive* out of Nashville were several participants in this "Southern renaissance." Intensely pro-sectional views could also be a part of the movement, particularly among the essayists. Indeed, nine men from the *Fugitive* circle were among the "Twelve Southerners" who penned the essays in *I'll Take My Stand*—its name itself was taken from the lyrics to "Dixie"—a 1930 tract which defended the ideals of the agrarian "Old South" against those of modern, industrial America. Several significant Southern historians also produced notable works in this period, including Ulrich B. Phillips, Douglas Southall Freeman, James Randall and Charles Ramsdell. In 1934, the Southern Historical Association organized and began publication of the *Journal of Southern History*. But

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[8] Connelly, *The Marble Man*, 126.

[9] *New York Times*, 2 January 1916.

[10] Ibid., 8 April 1928.

perhaps the most influential works dealing with the South and Southern history at the time were not scholarly but popular in nature. Novels such as Stark Young's *So Red the Rose*, Julia Peterkin's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* and Francis Griswold's *Tides of Malvern* all romanticized and popularized the image of the "Old South" for the entire nation. This theme reached a crescendo in 1937 with the publication of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind.* Mitchell's novel was so phenomenally popular that it was the nation's best-selling book in both 1937 and 1938. When the filmed version was released in 1939, it broke attendance records nation-wide. The Southern view of the South and its history had begun to find an audience outside of its home section.

There are several reasons as to why the 1930s saw such a rise in interest in Civil War and Confederate history. It may have been a reaction to a stream of disappointments in the 1920s and 30s. The popular conception that the First World War had failed to solve anything of consequence despite the horrific slaughter seen there, the economic devastation wrought by the Great Depression, and a worrisome increase in tensions in Europe eased Americans into an escapist view of their history. The South, in the popular eye, was no longer a seditious slavocracy, but a romantic land filled with loyal slaves, beautiful belles and dashing heroes. Escapism also produced an increase in hero worship, as seen by the adulation given public figures like Charles Lindbergh and Babe Ruth. As these figures exhibited many of the same characteristics military heroes are valued for—bravery, stamina, courage and "fair play"—it was natural that the military heroes of the Civil War should also be elevated to a higher plateau, with Robert E. Lee leading the way. It is also arguable that the apparent failure of democratic, industrial capitalism to act morally, a view which spread during the Great Depression, led to an increase in the

popularity of the "rebel" image. Public figures who openly went against the system drew great attention, even if they were violent criminals like "Pretty Boy" Floyd, John Dillinger, or Bonnie and Clyde.

It is interesting to note, however, that while interest in Civil War and antebellum history increased, the familiar manifestations of this interest did not. Confederate Memorial Day observances did not boom as they had in the 1890s, nor did interest in veterans' reunions, with the exception of the Gettysburg 75th anniversary, increase. Instead, the opposite was almost true. In 1932, for instance, a reunion of Georgia's Confederate veterans was canceled due to public indifference. Atlanta, Savannah, and Macon all decided not to extend invitations to the veterans due to general lack of interest.[11] Although it was not obvious at the time, the ways of celebrating the Confederate memory had begun to change once more. Previously, the focus had been on "real" symbols: the living veteran and the flag he carried. By the 1930s, however, the dwindling numbers of veterans, and the dwindling concern in their affairs, had reduced their role in society to little more than a curiosity. The major themes behind the Confederate memory then reverted to ones which were established earlier, and were, in turn, heightened by modern concepts. The idea of the sacredness of the Confederate memory, started by the Confederate memorial movement of the 1870s, was combined with the romanticized, 1930s image of the Old South. At the same time, the idea that the present generation of Southerners were the heirs to the Confederacy was bolstered by the Southern renaissance and popularized by this mythical ideal. Finally, the reunion which

[11] *New York Times*, 9 October 1932.

had gone on between North and South beginning in the early 1900s furthered the spread of the Confederate memory to the entire nation. Southern heroes had become American heroes, and the Confederate legacy could be honored by all white Americans.

The flags of the Confederacy, however, were a special case. In the 1930s, despite the changes taking place, the role Confederate flags played in society did not alter. Generally, they were taken out for observances or parades, and for little else. Nonetheless, these emblems occupied a different symbolic territory than the veterans did. Civil War veterans were living reminders of the past; unchanging symbolically, and of finite existence. Flags were also real reminders, but what they stood for could be altered. If, by the late 1930s, the Confederate heritage had clearly passed from the older to the existing generation, that was no reason why the Confederate flags, still potent symbols of the South, had to be relegated to the closet. The flag, like the Confederate memory itself, was about to change.

The event which triggered this change was the same one had which first proved to the North that the South was again loyal—war. During the Second World War, Southern soldiers gave the flags their first non-ceremonial function, using them to decorate ships, barracks, and military bases. A Texan on the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown, for instance, used one as a starting flag to signal pilots launching their planes.[12] Such flags were used, said one Southern naval officer, "to let the Yankees know the Americans south of the Mason-Dixon line are in this war."[13] Other, more historical flags, were also involved. In

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[12] *New York Times*, 6 August 1946.

[13] *Baltimore Evening Sun*. Quoted in Chris Springer, "The Troubled Resurgence of the Confederate Flag," *History Today* 43 (June 1993), 7.

1942, a battle flag which had once belonged to "Stonewall" Jackson was presented to General Douglas MacArthur, himself a Southerner.[14] The use of such symbols was not wholly limited to American soldiers either. One Australian soldier, Christopher Walker, had written a thesis on the American Civil War at university, and later visited the South, where he obtained a Confederate flag. Not only did he carry the flag with him when he fought in the Middle East, he succeeded in converting four fellow Australian soldiers into "Confederates," who toasted the flag nightly and swore to live up to the honor of Robert E. Lee. When Walker was killed in action in 1941, he was buried in Syria, draped in his flag.[15] Military use of the Confederate flag, official and unofficial, continued after the conclusion of the war. In 1947, Major General Butler B. Miltonberger, chief of the National Guard Bureau, approved a bill which allowed Southern regiments of the National Guard to carry Civil War battle streamers previously carried by Confederate regiments. Miltonberger said that the use of such symbols would "give visual evidence of the traditions of these Southern regiments."[16] Later, the flag itself was permitted to be worn on the uniforms of Southern National Guard soldiers.

The Confederate flag also found itself in a new arena in the 1940s, the sports arena. In October 1947, so the legend goes, a few fraternity brothers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill bought six Confederate flags from a local store. They later used them at a college football game in order to stir up the crowd. The popularity of

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[14] *New York Times*, 13 April 1942. MacArthur's father, a Northerner, had served in the Union Army during the Civil War.

[15] *New York Times*, 21 March 1946.

[16] *Washington Post*, 29 June 1947.

the action exploded, and the flag soon became a staple of Southern college football games. A few months later, University of Virginia fans brought the flag north to Philadelphia, publicizing the action still more.[17] Some colleges capitalized on the trend to an even greater degree. The University of Mississippi, whose teams had borne the name "Rebels" since 1936, and whose mascot had been the goateed, uniformed "Colonel Rebel" since the late 1930s, followed the trend with verve. Barely a year after the North Carolina incident, the University of Mississippi football team featured a half-time show consisting of gray-clad Army-Air Force ROTC members, and a huge 60 by 90 foot Confederate flag.[18]

At the same time the Confederate flag was used to represent the South on the football field, it also was being used in the political field, albeit as a symbol of belligerence and protest rather than simply one of pride. The target of this belligerence was the growing federal movement against racial discrimination and segregation. Beginning slowly in the 1930s, the federal Democratic party began to change their policies to the benefit of blacks. The New Deal, for instance, provided federal relief to blacks as well as whites. In 1936, the Democrats accredited black delegates for the first time in the party's history, despite protests that the action was the result of "professional agitators and adventurers" who were targeting "southern customs, southern traditions, [and] southern institutions."[19] During the war, these actions increased. In 1941, the Fair

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[17] Springer, "The Troubled Resurgence of the Confederate Flag," *History Today*, 43 (June 1993), 7; "The Flags are Flying in Dixie," *Business Week*, 25 November 1950, 48.

[18] Kevin Pierce Thornton, "Symbolism at Ole Miss and the Crisis of Southern Identity," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 86 (Summer 1987), 256-8.

[19] *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, quoted in David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race*

Employment Practices Committee was founded to supervise defense contractors and, it was hoped, to reduce incidents of discrimination. In 1944, the *Smith* v. *Allwright* Supreme Court decision found that political parties, as agents of the state, could not discriminate, thus eliminating the institution of the white primary. After the war, President Harry S Truman expanded the Democratic commitment to civil rights. In 1946, he founded the Commission of Higher Education, and declared that education could not be improved "until segregation legislation is repealed."[20] At the same time, Truman appointed a Committee on Civil Rights which, in its 1947 report, recommended outlawing lynching and the poll tax; the creation of laws to prevent voter discrimination; the desegregation of the armed forces, the District of Columbia, and interstate transport; the withdrawal of federal funds from segregated institutions; and the establishment of a permanent civil rights section within the Justice Department. Of these recommendations, only bills desegregating the armed forces and outlawing segregation by the federal government or in facilities operating under government contract were passed at the time.

These actions were more than enough, however, to raise the ire of Southern Democrats.[21] In May 1948, Mississippi Governor Fielding L. Wright gave a special message to the black population of the state, advising them that if any of them had "become so deluded as to want to enter our white schools, patronize our hotels and cafes,

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Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1990), 30.

[20] Quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 130.

[21] Southern Democrats, of course, were not the only objectors to Truman's civil rights plan. Many Northerners were also upset at the recommendations. No person or group in the political field made so cogent a display as the Dixiecrats did, however, nor did they take up the Confederate flag as their symbol.

enjoy social equality with the whites, then kindness requires me to advise you to make your home in some state other than Mississippi."[22] This speech was delivered the night before a meeting of the "States' Rights Conference," a group of self-professed "true white Jeffersonian Democrats" opposed to civil rights for blacks. In preparation for the event, Jackson's main street was bedecked with the flags of the Confederacy, some two weeks after Confederate Memorial Day.[23] Two months later, at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Southern delegates demanded that the party repudiate the planned reforms. When the convention refused to make such moves, delegates from Mississippi and Alabama stormed out, singing "Dixie" and waving, it was alleged, Confederate flags.[24] These Southern members reassembled in Birmingham soon afterward to pick South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond and Governor Wright as presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the 1948 election on a "States' Rights Democratic Party" ticket. At this gathering, Confederate emblems could not have been more apparent. Confederate bunting draped the auditorium, delegates freely waved flags and pictures of Robert E. Lee, a band played "Dixie," and Thurmond himself was led to the speaker's platform flanked by escorts carrying the American and a Confederate battle flag. The emotions which fired the meeting were clearly racist; Thurmond himself boasted to his crowd that "there are not enough troops in the Army to force the Southern

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[22] *New York Times*, 10 May 1948.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Springer "The Troubled Resurgence of the Confederate Flag," 8; Mark R. Halton, "Time To Furl the Confederate Flag," *Christian Century*, 18-25 May 1988, 495; "Those Rebel Flags," *Newsweek*, 24 November 1951, 24.

people to admit the Negroes into our theaters, swimming pools and homes."[25] The association of a characteristic Southern emblem—the Confederate flag—with a characteristic Southern trait of the time—rebellious, racist politics—had been made.

Perhaps due to the type of Southerner who brought the flag to the greater attention of the rest of the nation—the exuberant football fan rather than the segregationist politician—the general popularity of the Confederate flag continued it meteoric rise. By the summer of 1950 the waving of the "rebel flag" had begun to expand from its initial cadre of Southern regionalists and football supporters. Flags could now be found filling a more modern purpose—decorating automobiles. Teenagers, reportedly, enjoyed flying the flag from aerials and radiator caps, and painting its likeness on their cars' bodies. On Memorial Day, college pranksters in Boston raised a Confederate flag on the Massachusetts State House flagpole.[26] Flag sellers in the South and the North reported greater sales of Confederate flags than they had ever witnessed before. A vendor in Norfolk, Virginia, reported that he had not sold so many Confederate flags in the thirty years he had been in business, and a New York City manufacturer reported that demand was three times greater than it had ever been. In Florida, a seller reported that the majority of the buyers were "nothing more than damnyankees."[27]

By the fall of 1951, this fad had exploded in scale to become a full-fledged, nation-wide craze. Confederate flags were displayed by New York City Shriners, at a

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[25] *Atlanta Constitution*, 18 July 1948.

[26] *Boston Globe*, 31 May 1950.

[27] "The Flags are Flying in Dixie," 49.

Detroit air race, and during a beauty contest at Atlantic City.[28] The flag appeared as decoration on various goods like neckties and highball glasses. A blouse worn by "Miss Dixie" of 1951 was constructed out of a Confederate flag, an interesting reversal of the Battle Flag's legendary origins: it was supposedly made from silk taken from dresses donated by several Southern ladies.[29] In November, the owner of an Atlanta flag shop estimated that business had jumped 400 percent since May, while a Washington dealer said that Confederate flags were outselling American flags by a ratio of three to one.[30] Echoing its use in World War Two, American soldiers in the Korean War flew the flag. One Corporal, who was pictured planting a Confederate Jack atop a Korean hill, said that seeing as how he was fighting for the *South* Koreans, the flag "with its fond memories of the Old South, might inspire me to carry on." The United Nations flag, he said, was far too impersonal, as most soldiers did not even know what one looked like.[31] One Naval Destroyer Division, nicknamed the "Dixie Division," regularly displayed small Confederate flags at the signal halyards, until the Navy forced a stop to the practice.[32] Politicians, of course, were not ones to let opportunity go to waste. At Selma, Alabama, Senator Byrd, making an anti-civil rights speech, wore a brilliant Confederate flag tie,

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[28] E. John Long, "Conquest by Bunting," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 October 1951, 52.

[29] "The Flag, Suh!," *Life*, 15 October 1951, 64.

[30] "Those Rebel Flags," 24.

[31] *New York Times*, 21 October 1951; 4 November 1951.

[32] Ibid., 4 April 1952. The ban was due to restrictions on unauthorized flags of any kind, not just Confederate emblems. A similar contemporary problem occurred when visitors flying Confederate flags from their cars were refused entry to Capitol parking lots in Washington DC. This was the result of a rule seeking to ban placards and other devices used in demonstrations, and not just the Confederate flag. *New York Times*, 9 November 1951.

and in Atlanta, the mayor, William Hartsfield, led the city's symphony with a Confederate flag as the conductor's baton.[33]

Reasons for the flag's popularity, however, were hard to come by. Some speculated that flying it was an anti-Truman, pro-South gesture,[34] but this rationale does not explain why the flag should become popular nation-wide. Another explanation was that it was merely a fad, which would go the way of "Little Audrey jokes and pyramid clubs,"[35] and needed no real justification. That may have been true in the early 1950s, but it cannot explain the flag's enduring popularity. A more satisfying reason is provided by one of the subtexts the flag sends, that of rebellion. After the mid-1950s, the flag was picked up as a symbol by groups which saw themselves as outside of the mainstream, such as motorcyclists, rock 'n' roll musicians, truck drivers, and all manner of disaffected youth—not to mention those politicians and voters whose opinions of federally enforced desegregation matched the earlier Dixiecrats'. Much as the flag was originally a symbol of the Confederacy's rebellion against the United States, it was seen by people of this stripe as a symbol of their rebellion against "authority." It is an image which has survived to this day, and one which has become a part of popular culture world-wide. Whether those people who make such use of Confederate flags ignore, are ignorant of, or support the symbols' other connotations, including ones involving race, is a matter of conjecture.

Despite the popularity of Confederate symbols, there was some opposition in the

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[33] "Warmed Over Again: Politicians Turn the Dixie Flag into a Sour Gag," *Life*, 3 December 1951, 107.

[34] Long, "Conquest by Bunting," 53; "Those Rebel Flags," 24.

[35] "Those Rebel Flags," 24.

early 1950s to their "improper" use. The members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy were particularly outspoken in their opposition. Mrs. Samuel D. West, president of the Virginia division of the UDC, voiced concern that although the Daughters "like to keep the flag before the young people because they do not learn enough about it from their history books . . . we fear losing its significance through the loose way in which they use it."[36] Other members spoke out more bitterly, saying that using "flags like fox tails on car radiator caps" cheapened the flag's image.[37] In New Jersey, the local chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War called the fad "improper and entirely out of order," and "a form of subversive action."[38] Likewise, certain members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) challenged Southern members' use of Confederate flags during VFW gatherings. This objection was met with wrath from the Southern members. Warren S. Reese, state commander of the Alabama chapter, vowed that "if you try to drive the Confederate flag from this organization, you're driving the South out of this organization."[39] A compromise was reached, and the next day, Southern members of the VFW laid wreaths at prominent statues in New York, while carrying both the Confederate and American flags, and dressed in the uniforms of Confederate colonels.[40] But these protests were contrary to the reaction of the majority of white Americans, who generally viewed the "craze" with amusement, if not sympathy.

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[36] "The Flags are Flying in Dixie," 49.

[37] "The Flag, Suh!!," *Life*, 66.

[38] *New York Times*, 29 August 1951.

[39] Ibid., 30 August 1951.

[40] *New York Times*, 31 August 1951.

While the immense popularity of Confederate flags among the general population waned quickly, the fad was not entirely a passing fancy. The fact that the Confederate flag can still be seen today, decorating a myriad of consumer goods, is proof of the lasting changes effected by the events of the late 1940s and early 1950s. By the end of this period, it becomes clear that the Confederate flag had undergone a transformation even more profound than the change which affected views of the antebellum and Civil War-era South. The popularity of the flag in wartime, sports and politics turned it from an exclusive emblem of the Confederacy and Confederate veterans into an all-purpose Southern symbol. The nation-wide popularity, and the "rebel" symbolism which followed it, then moved the flag entirely beyond the realm of the Confederate memory, changing it from a historical and regional symbol to a symbol of popular culture. The flag could be viewed, and flaunted, with or without regard to its historical meaning. The myth of the Old South was a past ideal, a romantic notion that white Americans could only look back upon longingly. In contrast, the Confederate flag had become a contemporary symbol as relevant to its followers as the American flag itself, if not more so.

The events of the 1940s and early 1950s marked significant changes in the way Confederate emblems were viewed by white Americans. Before the 1940s, the flags were distinctly sectional and historical emblems. They were easily recognizable for what they represented—the Confederate States of America. Although many in the South considered their contemporary section to be the heir to the Confederacy, and although many Americans could certainly claim the military heroes of the Confederacy as American heroes, there still remained distinct times and places when it was permissible for the Confederacy's flags to be displayed. In the 1940s, however, the role of the flag began to

change. By being drawn into events associated with inter-sectional rivalry, such as college sports and fractious politics, the flags began to rise beyond the historical bounds placed on them, and they became emblematic of the contemporary as well as the historical South. This new view had an odd side-effect, however. When combined with other factors present in American culture at the time—a resurgence of interest in the South, the Confederacy and the Civil War in general; and an increase in the "rebellious" ideal among racist politicians and disaffected social groups alike—the flag abandoned its historical contexts to become a symbol of American popular culture, a role it still holds. But at the very time the Confederate flag seemed poised to discard what historical baggage still remained, it began facing its strongest and most serious criticism. This criticism came from the group whose role in American history had been marginalized, and whose bid for equality Southern politicians brought forth the emblems of the Confederacy against: American blacks.

Chapter Six

The Flag and Racism

The school of thought which sees the Confederate flag as a racist symbol has resulted in what is certainly the strongest challenge Confederate symbols have ever faced. Beginning in the early 1950s in black newspapers and periodicals, and spreading throughout the nation in the 1960s and 1970s, this view focused on the racist nature of the Confederacy and its role as a defender of slavery, as well as the association the Confederate flag had with racist governments and organizations during the Civil Rights debates of the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Beginning in the early 1960s, and continuing throughout the 1970s, these opinions began to manifest themselves in acts of protest, as black students began attending desegregated schools festooned with Confederate symbolism. In the mid-1980s, the fight against the flag expanded to include banners used by various Southern state governments, a debate which continues today. The resulting fierceness of the debate has resulted in much greater publicity, which has produced three notable side-effects. Firstly, it has brought even more challenges, not only to the flag but to Confederate symbolism of all sorts. Secondly, it has boosted the popularity of organizations dedicated to the preservation of the Confederate heritage, although such organizations rely mainly on older themes of Lost Cause sectionalism and have little concern with the opinions of black Americans. Thirdly, and less apparent, is the effect the debate has had on popular opinion on the Confederacy and its emblems. The concerns of the flag attackers and the flag defenders have conspired to increase the historical

relevance of Confederate symbols, rescuing them, in a sense, from being relegated to duty as tieclips and pickup truck decorations.

Despite the racist and sectionalist politics with which it was associated, the early 1950s fad for flying the Confederate flag was largely viewed by white Americans as an innocuous diversion. Many blacks, however, held different views. Indeed, black criticism of Confederate celebrations can be seen as far back as the late nineteenth century. In 1890, for instance, the black newspaper *Richmond Planet* objected to the equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee, and the resultant fanfare its raising caused, calling the monument "a legacy of treason and blood."[1] In the early 1950s, black newspapers such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* took the lead in decrying the new fad of Confederate flag-waving, and proclaimed it "a national disgrace."[2] In 1951, at the height of the craze, William L. Patterson, National Executive Secretary of the Civil Rights Congress wrote a forceful letter to the *New York Times* criticizing an article in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "Conquest by Bunting." Patterson objected to the term "fad" when used to describe the spread of the Confederate flag. He preferred to call it "mounting fascism," and said that:

> the political atmosphere is conducive to everything for which the Confederacy stood and stands. It is evidence of the resurgence of the spirit of the unregenerate slavery-loving Bourbons. They lost the war in 1861, but who can deny that they won the ideological struggle, in

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[1] *Richmond Planet*, quoted in *Los Angeles Times*, 9 March 1987. Black opposition to the use of flags and other Confederate regalia was certainly present before the 1950s. Before that time, however, the white popular press makes no mention of such opinions. A careful study of other media, especially the black press, may yield earlier, documented, reports of such attitudes.

[2] *Pittsburgh Courier*, quoted in Chris Springer, "The Troubled Resurgence of the Confederate Flag," *History Today*, 43 (June 1993), 9.

> which the theory of the inferiority of some men because of color, nationality, religion, or political belief was paramount?

He also objected to the use of Confederate flags by soldiers in Korea, and speculated that the use "of the flag of those who once sought to cover the United States with slavery . . . will presage the dropping of other atomic bombs."[3] Generally, however, the popular press continued to pay little attention to such opinions, and, outside of the occasional attack in the black media, the view was rarely heard. Likewise, large-scale, public protest was not initiated at this time by blacks or black organizations, most likely because such actions would have had little influence, and, more importantly, the Civil Rights movement had many, more significant, fights on its hands.

As the 1950s progressed, Southern opposition to black civil rights deepened. Numerous national, state, and local politicians throughout the area took up the banner of the Dixiecrats in their opposition to federally-sponsored moves towards black equality. These protests increased in number and ferocity after the May 1954 Supreme Court decision in the case of *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka*. Essentially, the Supreme Court rejected the conclusions of the 1896 *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* decision, which allowed communities to establish racially segregated facilities so long as equal facilities were provided to both blacks and whites. "Separate educational facilities" concluded the court, "are inherently unequal."[4] In response to the decision, politicians throughout the South

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[3] *New York Times*, 28 October 1951.

[4] *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, 347, U.S. 483 (1954), quoted in "*Brown* v. *Board of Education*," in Thomas D. Clark, ed. *The South Since Reconstruction* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1973), 242.

embarked on a policy of "massive resistance." State legislatures passed hundreds of laws which closed schools marked for desegregation, allowed white students to transfer to other schools, fired teachers who taught mixed classes, and diverted state funds to private schools; all of which allowed the states to effectively dodge the Supreme Court's order. State and local governments also attempted to tie the hands of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) by firing any of its members on the public payroll and by barring the organization from challenging local segregation laws.[5] These acts were followed up federally in the summer of 1956, when 101 out of 128 Southern Congressmen signed a "Southern Manifesto" opposing the *Brown* decision and other proposals, claiming these measures would increase federal power to an unconstitutional level and "result in deterioration of the goodwill and harmonious relations existing between the races."[6]

Governments were not the only participants in the protest over desegregation. In the summer of 1954, not long after the *Brown* decision, groups of white Southerners organized themselves into "Citizens' Councils." The main role of the Councils was to prevent integration and racial equality—at the school, at the ballot box and on the city street. This was mainly done by applying economic, social and political pressure on those who opposed the Councils' beliefs.[7] The black paper *Montgomery Advertiser* called the

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[5] David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1990), 79.

[6] *Congressional Record*, 13 July 1956, p.12761, quoted in "The Congressional Manifesto," in Clark, *The South Since Reconstruction*, 477.

[7] For a more complete discussion, see Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

Councils "manicured Kluxism . . . an abomination in the eyes of public opinion."[8] The integration issue also caused the membership of the Ku Klux Klan to rise after nearly two decades of decline and disappointment. The Klan remained a small force at this time, however, as it was mainly made up of whites who found the Citizens' Councils too conservative for their liking; the Klansmen were, in the words of one historian, "marginal fanatics and mercenary opportunists."[9] The use of Confederate flags by both groups was very apparent. The Klan broke with its own modern traditions and began carrying Confederate flags, most likely for the first time in the twentieth century,[10] while the Citizens' Councils were even bolder. One of the principal ways this group raised support was through massive rallies like the ones organized by the Dixiecrats years before. Like those prior rallies, these prominently featured Confederate flags and the playing of "Dixie." To use the words of a speaker at one Montgomery rally, their "battle cry" was "states' rights and white supremacy," and their battle flag was the Confederate.[11]

In comparison with their use by private citizens or organizations, the flags of the Confederacy rarely were accorded an active role in the official politics of the 1950s, with one notable exception. In February 1956, the Georgia Legislature voted forty-one to two

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[8] *Montgomery Advertiser*; Quoted in Goldfield, *Black, White and Southern*, 82.

[9] David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan, 1865-1965*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), 349.

[10] I have yet to see a twentieth-century photo of the Klan taken before the 1950s which shows a Confederate flag. Even in the 1920s, when the Klan was at its peak popularity, it carried the Stars and Stripes exclusively. This is not to say that Klansmen did not otherwise play up their Confederate connections. Indeed, in 1923, the commander-in-chief of the United Confederate Veterans was elected with the support of a KKK faction, while a member was pleased to announce "I am a rebel, and a Ku Klux too" (*New York Times*, 13 April 1923). The Klan merely accepted the Southern conventions of the time which governed the time and place to fly such banners.

[11] *New York Times*, 11 February 1956; 10 March 1956.

to change the state flag from its 1914 design, replacing its three stripes with the Confederate Battle Flag. The new flag pattern was designed by John Sammons Bell, leader of the state Democratic Party. As the story goes, Bell first sketched this design when he was a child. While attending reunions of Georgia Confederate veterans with his grandfather, Bell was struck by the incongruous fact that although the Battle Flag design was dominant at these reunions, it was the less recognizable and less appreciated "Stars and Bars" pattern which influenced the state flag. Obviously, the attainment of a high position in the Georgia government allowed Bell to implement his childhood wish of providing an official symbol which gave a more tangible tribute to Confederate veterans.[12]

It is a matter of some debate whether this was the sole intention of the 1956 design change. On one side is the fact that there are no contemporary references implying that Georgia's legislators changed the flag for reasons other than to honor the Confederacy and Georgia's history. Indeed, the most important concern of legislators was whether Bell held a copyright on the design, and would therefore benefit financially from each sale of the new flag—no small matter, considering every public building in Georgia bought a new flag after the change.[13] On the other side, however, are facts concerning the defiant, segregationist nature of the legislature in power in 1956. In 1993, Denmark Groover, who had been Democratic floor leader in 1956, admitted that he had been "motivated by a desire to defy" and that his willingness to support the flag change was

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[12] Charles Lunsford, *The Story of the Georgia Flag: A Southern Perspective*, sound recording by the author, 1993, cassette. Lunsford is a spokesman for the Sons of Confederate veterans.

[13] *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 February 1956. Bell did not apply for any such copyright.

"in a large part because . . . that flag symbolized a willingness of a people to sacrifice their all for their beliefs."[14] The same day that the flag change was officially accepted, 13 February 1956, the Georgia senate approved a resolution calling the Supreme Court anti-segregation decision "null, void and of no effect."[15]

To deny that the change in the Georgia flag lacked any segregationist symbolism is to ignore the political role Confederate flags had played in the eight years preceding the change. Indeed, it is by viewing this use of Confederate flags during the charged days of the 1950s and 1960s as an outgrowth of the uses pioneered in the 1940s that this change can be better explained. By the early 1950s, the Confederate flag was recognized as the most important symbol of the South, while the Dixiecrats succeeded in making it the standard of segregationist politics. Its later use by the Ku Klux Klan and the Citizens' Councils was a natural follow-up; by the middle 1950s, the Confederate flag had become a political symbol. Like any symbol, it was used to represent a pre-recognized, abstract, concept. In this case, it was the idea of defiance of the North in favor of support for Southern values, which included segregation. This change, as with the later addition of the Confederate flag to flag staffs in Alabama and South Carolina, was not an unprecedented move. Southerners and Northerners were already aware of the connotations which the political use of the Confederate flag carried with it—connotations which Groover later clarified for those too young, or perhaps too forgetful, to remember. Thus the Georgia legislature had no need, or reason, to proclaim the flag as a symbol of

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[14] Ibid., 10 March 1993.

[15] *New York Times*, 14 February 1956.

protest—as with any symbol, the mere display of it provided all necessary meaning.

Starting in the early 1960s, popular opposition to the flag's racist past and present began to mount. Some of the first volleys heard in the general press came, ironically, during the Civil War centennial years of 1961-1965—a time when Civil War history was more popular than it had been since the 1930s. Much of this criticism was directed against the nature of the celebrations, which tended to gloss over the real issues of the war in favor of the same reconciliatory feelings which had existed since the early 1900s, feelings which, by their very nature, tended to glorify the romantic myth of the "Old South." Lawrence D. Reddick, a black educator and author, charged in a speech to the New York Teachers' Union that the centennial celebrations perpetuated the "unhistorical romance" of the "Confederacy myth." He also denounced the misuse of Confederate flags, saying that if these flags were "meant to be a barrier in the minds of people against national policies and progress, they should be gathered and burned."[16]

The commercial nature of the centennial was also commented on for doing the same things. In Charleston, gray-clad waitresses at the Fort Sumter Hotel served drinks with names such as "Confederate Highball" and "Rebel on the Rocks." The Dixie Insurance Company promised that any new policies would be delivered by men wearing Confederate uniforms. In four Southern states, Chrysler sold a limited edition, gray, "Dixie Special" version of its Plymouth Valiant. Countless other items of memorabilia, including toys, books, tableware, playing cards, ties and tieclips, were produced, many with some form of Confederate flag adorning them. In five days of celebrations

[16] Ibid., 23 April 1961.

commemorating Jefferson Davis' inaugural, the city of Montgomery made a $20,000 profit from the sale of such souvenirs.[17]

Other criticisms were directed at the actions of the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC). A federal agency founded in 1957, the Commission aimed to "promote and stimulate observances, memorial programs, pageants and other events" by encouraging "fitting celebrations" of "dignity and respect."[18] "Dignity," to the Commission, must have included the blatant hucksterism described above, as it sanctioned, and even encouraged, many such actions. Karl Betts, executive director of the CWCC, went so far as to claim that although "the South may have lost the war," by its marketing of the Confederate memory, "it's sure to win the centennial." A CWCC pamphlet aimed at advertisers touted the potential of Civil War themes; tobacco companies, for instance, were encouraged to publicize the fact that the sharing of tobacco covertly brought troops from both sides together during the conflict.[19] But while the salable spin-offs of the Civil War were touted by the CWCC, the real issues behind the war were lost as the Commission reverted to the old, inoffensive theme of white reconciliation. A booklet issued in 1961 by the Commission entitled "Facts About the Civil War" was particularly criticized for taking such a stand. The booklet made no mention of slavery and its role in the conflict, or the fact that blacks made up twelve

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[17] "Centennial of the Civil War . . . Business Booms Like the Gettysburg Cannon," *Newsweek*, 27 March 1961, 76-8.

[18] *New York Times*, 9 June 1957.

[19] "Centennial of the Civil War," 76.

percent of the Union army.[20] While such a view was not unpredictable, especially coming from such a group, and during the greatest unrest in the South since Reconstruction, it was a view which would receive more criticism in the future.

Throughout the 1960s, as the civil rights movement made gains against racism and segregation, the Confederate flag drew more detractors. In April 1963, G. Ray Kerciu, Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Mississippi, was arrested and charged with desecrating the Confederate flag in his painting entitled "America the Beautiful." The painting was of a large Confederate flag with racist slogans scrawled on it. Mississippi law prohibited the "desecration" of Confederate flags, and the professor faced up to seven months' imprisonment and $600 in fines. The complainant was a law student and an officer in the Oxford-Ole Miss Citizens' Council.[21] Three months later, Amos Basel, a black New York politician campaigned for city council with the promise that he would call for a city bylaw banning the sale and display of Confederate flags, as they had become "a sordid reminder of a period of slavery that continues to be used by forces seeking to perpetuate racial bigotry."[22] This campaign, though ultimately unsuccessful, resulted in numerous letters to the editor, almost all of which agreed with Mr. Basel. One said that the Confederate banner was "as much a symbol of outlawry as the skull and bones, the Black Hand and the swastika" and that its use by racists and their "stupid" followers had "destroyed irreparably its significance as an emblem of courage

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[20] "Rally Round What Flag?" *Commonweal*, 9 June 1961, 271-2.

[21] *New York Times*, 10 April 1963; 11 April 1963.

[22] Ibid., 27 July 1963.

and gallantry."[23] Another claimed that the flag had little honor to begin with, as it was under the Confederate flag "that the advocates of slavery sought to destroy the Union. . . . The Confederate flag is a symbol of hatred and racism, and I must protest your meaning that the race bigots of the South, acting under that flag, are acting contrary to the traditions of that emblem."[24]

Despite these protests, white Southerners continued to flaunt the rebel banner as a symbol of defiance. In March 1966, two separate organizations in Jackson, Mississippi, Americans for the Preservation of the White Race, and the Association of Christian Conservatives, called for Confederate flags to be waved in protest during a visit by Robert Kennedy.[25] The following year, Alabama Governor Lurleen B. Wallace supported the passing of a bill which required all state-supported universities and colleges to fly Confederate flags and play "Dixie" at football games. The law required that, before each game, three songs be played—the national anthem, the state song, and "Dixie"—and three flags be raised—the Stars and Stripes, the state flag, and the Confederate Battle Flag.[26]

This last move, the raising of flags at educational institutions, is interesting because in the late 1960s and early 1970s public schools were where Confederate emblems first faced opponents dedicated to their removal on the basis of their racist symbolism. Throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, Southern schools, colleges

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[23] Ibid., 24 September 1963.

[24] Ibid., 25 September 1963.

[25] Ibid., 16 March 1966.

[26] *Montgomery Advertiser*, 4 August 1967.

and universities began the process of integration which began with the *Brown* ruling. But as these schools became integrated and, in some cases, took on a majority black population, it became obvious that certain things would have to change. Some of the schools in question relied on Confederate flags and other regalia as school emblems, many of which dated back to the 1950s. In most cases, the new black pupils objected to their presence. Sometimes, the changes were made without incident. In May 1968, the student government at the University of Texas in Arlington voted 12-5 to stop using the Confederate flag as the school flag, and to change the name of the football team from the "Rebels."[27] In September of that year, Archbishop Rummel High School in Omaha, Nebraska, similarly abandoned the Confederate Flag amid concerns that the flag represented "a society that has attempted to destroy our system of government and maintain the enslavement of millions of black people."[28] (Why an Omaha high school should have chosen the flag as a symbol in the first place was not explained, although it most likely dated back to the flag craze of the early 1950s.)

Other protests produced controversy. In Lebanon, Tennessee, a black high school band member was suspended when he left the band in the middle of a rendition of "Dixie." When his mother, a teacher's aide at the school, complained, she was dismissed from her job without hearing or notice. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) stepped in to offer legal assistance. Charles Morgan, Jr., the Southern Regional Director of the ACLU said that, to a black person, the playing of "Dixie" was "like singing 'The

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[27] *New York Times*, 2 May 1968.

[28] Ibid., 26 September 1968.

Horst Wessel Song' in a kosher delicatessen. . . . Folks got a constitutional right to play 'Dixie,' but they've got no constitutional right to make Negroes do it."[29] Protests over the playing of "Dixie" also erupted at the University of Tennessee, while the song was banned at both the University of Miami and the University of Kentucky. Around the same time, some students at the University of South Carolina voiced their displeasure with that school's use of Confederate symbols by burning Confederate flags. One student was arrested and charged with desecrating a Confederate flag.[30] In October 1971, student council members at Dixie Hollins High School in St. Petersburg, Florida, voted to stop using the Confederate flag as its school emblem. The week before a new flag was to be chosen, a pitched battle erupted when an eighty-car motorcade of Confederate flag waving whites arrived at the school, and were confronted by a largely black crowd. More than fifty policemen were required to quell the disturbance.[31]

An even greater struggle had occurred at Strom Thurmond High School in Edgefield, South Carolina, the preceding year. Beginning in September 1970, and after much debate, the school was desegregated. Initially, the school board wanted to institute an achievement test for prospective students. All students performing badly would be sent to a "progressive school." It was asserted by the group Community Action for Full Citizenship of Edgefield County (CAFC) that this test was a ruse and that the so-called "progressive school" would instead be a dumping ground for black students. A boycott of

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[29] *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, 9 March 1969. *New York Times*, 9 March 1969.

[30] *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, 9 March 1969.

[31] *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times*, 13 October 1971. *New York Times*, 15 October 1971.

the test was organized and the school board relented.[32] In September, the school changed from being one-hundred percent white to being sixty-five percent black. As these new students entered the school, however, they quickly became aware of its symbols. Not only was it named after Strom Thurmond, the famous South Carolinian segregationist, it also made liberal use of Confederate symbols. The football team was nicknamed the "Old Rebels," the school mascot was the "Old Confederate Rebel," and during football games, the band played "Dixie" while cheerleaders carried a huge Confederate flag. The new students, already politically charged by the desegregation debates of the summer, acted in force. They quit the football team, the cheerleading squad, and the band before walking out of classes in protest. The school administration refused to change any of the symbols, and the school board backed them up—in fact, the board obtained an injunction banning the CAFC from writing to the school board or from gathering on school property. In response, the CAFC served a lawsuit on the school board which claimed that Strom Thurmond High was a segregated school and that the regalia of the Confederacy it used violated the civil rights of black students. Eventually, in January 1973, the case came before the South Carolina state courts. By this time, however, the principal of the school had come to an agreement with the protesting students. "Dixie" was dropped from the band's repertoire, and both the "Rebel" mascot and the huge Confederate flag were eliminated.

In the time that elapsed between the initial protests and the decision in South Carolina, two interesting court cases elsewhere were also resolved. In Virginia, the

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[32] Laughlin McDonald, "Mixing it Up in Edgefield," *Civil Liberties Review* 2 (Winter 1975), 79-80.

Attorney General declared that a ban on the flying of the Confederate flag at University of Virginia football games was unconstitutional. However, this only applied to the right of fans to display the flag and had no bearing on the university's decision not to use it as an official emblem.[33] This decision was followed up a few months later with a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals in St. Louis over the matter of twenty-nine students at a Jonesboro, Arkansas, high school who were suspended for walking out of school during the playing of "Dixie." The court exonerated the high school, and described "Dixie" as "one of the most frolicking of our national songs, known and loved throughout the world" and not a symbol of slavery.[34]

Throughout the rest of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, reaction against Confederate symbols in educational institutions continued, although such actions were not as vocal, numerous, or demanding as they had been. One of the last of these battles, as well as one of the most significant, occurred in 1982 at the University of Mississippi. "Ole Miss" had been one of the first Southern universities to make Confederate symbols school symbols, as its use of the Confederate flag, a "Colonel Rebel" mascot, and "Dixie" dated back to the late 1940s. The school was also not unfamiliar with protests in regard to its emblems. In 1970, a group of black students burned a Confederate flag in the school's cafeteria and, among other demands, asked for an end to the use of the Confederate flag; but this request was passed over in favor of the other grievances.[35] By the late 1970s,

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[33] *New York Times*, 21 October 1971.

[34] Ibid., 16 January 1972.

[35] For a complete discussion of this issue, see Kevin Pierce Thornton, "Symbolism at Ole Miss and the Crisis of Southern Identity," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 86 (Summer 1987), 254-268.

however, the university's continued use of Confederate symbols had created an interesting problem. While the school's alumni and many of its present students wanted to keep the Confederate emblems, it soon became clear that they were both deterring promising black athletes from attending, and causing friction among students already enrolled.

The issue that brought the matter to a head arose at the beginning of the school year in 1982. The school's first black cheerleader, John Hawkins, pledged that he would not raise the Confederate flag because "many blacks view it as a symbol of slavery." Although alternate flags were proposed, the school's alumni association threatened to have college officials fired if the flag was changed.[36] Throughout the school year, the issue was debated heavily among students, administrators and other interested parties. In October, the Mississippi Ku Klux Klan got into the fray by holding a rally in support of the Confederate flag. This turned out to be more of a hindrance than a help to those supporting the flag, on two counts: firstly, the Klan's action supported the allegations of those who saw the flag as a racist symbol; and secondly, when photos of the rally were published in the school yearbook at the end of the school year, opposition not only to the flag, but all Confederate symbols, reached a peak.[37] On 20 April 1983, University Chancellor Porter Fortune declared that, henceforth, official use of the Confederate flag as a symbol of the University would cease. Both Colonel Rebel and "Dixie" were spared,

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[36] *Washington Post*, 27 September 1982.

[37] See comments of Lydia Spragin, President of the Black Students' Union, *Washington Post*, 21 April 1983.

however.[38]

The debate over the racist nature of the Confederate flag entered its most important phase—a phase it has yet to leave—in 1987. In that year, the Southeast Regional Conference of the NAACP issued a resolution calling for an end to the official use of Confederate flags by state governments. The targets of the resolution were the state flags of Georgia and Mississippi, as well as the Confederate flags which flew above the capitol buildings in Alabama and South Carolina. This move was an interesting one for the NAACP, as the group had never before taken such an active stance opposing Confederate symbols.[39] The reasoning behind the motion, however, could not have been made clearer. Alvin Holmes, a seven-term state representative from Alabama best expressed the NAACP view when he characterized the flag which flew above the Alabama capitol as "the flag of a defunct and disgraced nation, one that wanted to hold my forebears in slavery. Every Confederate flag or symbol of the Confederacy should be barred from Alabama and every other part of the country."[40]

The first manifestation of this new resolve took place in Alabama, where NAACP leaders promised that if the Confederate flag was not taken down before the legislature reconvened on 2 February 1988, they would take it down themselves. The flag, they proposed, should be allowed to be displayed only at the first White House of the

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[38] Thornton, "Symbolism at Ole Miss," 267; *New York Times*, 21 April 1983.

[39] In April 1971, the NAACP in Baton Rouge filed suit in an attempt to change the name of Robert E. Lee High School, and in 1976 its New Orleans chapter tried to get the city to remove a marker erected by the Crescent City White League in 1874 to honor Louisiana "Redeemers." Both actions failed, although the New Orleans monument was dismantled in 1993. See *New York Times*, 11 April 1971; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 10 September 1976.

[40] *Los Angeles Times*, 9 March 1987.

Confederacy in Montgomery.[41] When the flag was not removed by the appointed time, fourteen members of the Alabama NAACP, including Thomas Reed, who was both a member of the state legislature and state NAACP president, kept their promise and attempted to take the flag down by force. Before gaining admittance to the capitol grounds, they were arrested and charged with second degree criminal trespass, a charge that would eventually net them one-hundred dollar fines.[42] Despite the failure of this physical attempt, other, legal means were also tried. A motion calling for the removal of the flag was put before the legislature, but was defeated soundly. In July, the NAACP filed a civil rights suit in Federal District Court, asking that the flag be removed, as its presence could violate the Constitutional rights of those offended by it. The suit was rejected, but the NAACP appealed the decision. In January 1990, the Federal Appellate Court in Atlanta upheld the earlier decision and the flag was allow to stay.[43]

In April 1992, the debate was given a new twist when the flagpole on the Alabama capitol dome was removed so that renovations could be made. During this time, the NAACP once again pressed the issue, referring to a nineteenth-century Alabama law which prohibited flags other than the state and national flags from flying over the capitol. This time, the Alabama Circuit Court ruled in the NAACP's favor.[44] When construction was completed five months later, only the two official flags were raised. The Confederate flag which had flown over the capitol was moved to the first White House of the

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[41] *Montgomery Advertiser*, 3 February 1988.

[42] *New York Times*, 3 February 1988; 11 January 1989.

[43] *New York Times*, 21 January 1990; *Atlanta Constitution*, 21 January 1990.

[44] *New York Times*, 27 January 1993.

Confederacy. Governor Jim Folsom, son of the moderate Alabama governor of the 1950s, proclaimed that the entire matter was "a divisive issue in our state, and I believe it is time we put it behind us and move our state forward."[45] The NAACP victory was short-lived, however. Although the Circuit Court decision prevented the flag from returning to the capitol dome, on 25 April 1994, Confederate Memorial Day in Alabama, the flag was placed on a Confederate monument on the capitol grounds.[46]

An even harder battle was fought in the case of the Georgia state flag. Protest against this particular device was not a new idea. In 1969, state representative Janet S. Merritt, a white Democrat, submitted a bill to restore the flag to its pre-1956 design, due to the anti-integration connotations the newer design carried with it.[47] The attempt, and another one like it in 1972, failed. After the 1987 NAACP resolution, further efforts were made. In 1988, the NAACP gathered 16,000 names on a petition which demanded the flag be changed. In March 1992 an active campaign, launched by the Georgia Civil Rights Network and backed up by the NAACP, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National Organization for Women, was organized. Three months later, Georgia Governor Zell Miller took up the cause by promising to introduce legislation removing the battle flag element from the state flag. He too cited the flag as being "a defiant symbol of the segregationist South."[48] After almost a year of bitter debate and fierce protests,

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[45] *New York Times*, 1 May 1993.

[46] *Atlanta Constitution*, 26 April 1994.

[47] Ibid., 26 February 1969.

[48] *New York Times*, 29 May 1992; *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 May 1992.

including demonstrations by flag-burners and the Ku Klux Klan,[49] Miller backed off, ostensibly because the bill had no chance of passing.[50]

Despite this abandonment by the state legislature, the Georgia flag controversy was soon acted out other venues. Around the time of Miller's announcement that he was shelving the issue, Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson signed an ordinance which replaced the state flag with its pre-1956 design.[51] Atlanta Stadium, however, continued to fly the 1956 flag, as the stadium was, and still is, a state facility. This led to protests at the 1994 Super Bowl, held in Atlanta. Before the game, nearly sixty-five reporters left their respective pressboxes for the duration of the national anthem in protest.[52] Less than a month later, the Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority voted to remove the 1956 state flag, and make no substitutions.[53]

The publicity these debates generated brought the flag debate into other fields as well. In August 1991, the Boy Scouts of America voted to ban the official use of Confederate symbols among Southern troops after their use was protested by a member.[54] In 1993, the Virginia Air National Guard was ordered to remove Confederate emblems from its flight suits and aircraft.[55] But perhaps the most famous incident involved the

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[49] *New York Times,* 13 February 1993; 10 March 1993.

[50] *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 March 1993.

[51] Brian Britt, "Georgia Rallies 'Round the Flag," *The Nation*, 5 April 1993, 450.

[52] *New York Times*, 31 January 1994.

[53] *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 February 1994.

[54] *New York Times*, 25 August 1991.

[55] Ibid., 27 January 1993.

design patent on the logo of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). About ten patriotic groups, such as the American Legion and the UDC, have, since 1909, been given a Congressional patent on their logo. Such a patent is a mark of honor and prestige for these groups. These patents are renewed every fourteen years, and 1993 marked the fifth time the UDC patent, containing the Stars and Bars of the Confederate first national flag, was put before the Senate. The bill was put forward by veteran senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina as a "rider" on another bill, and, at first reading, passed 52-48. Senator Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, the first black woman senator, caught the attempt, and objected strenuously to it by giving an impassioned speech on the Civil War and the Confederate flag's relation to slavery. She explained:

> On this issue there can be no consensus. It is an outrage. It is an insult. It is absolutely unacceptable to me and to millions of Americans, black or white, that we would put the imprimatur of the United States Senate on a symbol of this kind of idea.[56]

The issue was voted on once more. Twenty-seven senators changed their votes, and the patent was refused, seventy-five to twenty-five. Howard Heflin of Alabama, one of the twenty-seven, changed his vote even though, as he said, his ancestors "might be spinning in their graves" because he believed that "we live today in a different world."[57]

The key arguments of those who oppose the Confederate flag as a symbol of racism are relatively straightforward. To them, Confederate symbols are racist symbols, most prominently borne by two oppressive white regimes—the one which fought to

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[56] *New York Times*, 23 July 1993, May 10 1993; Michael Riley, "Nixing Dixie," *Time*, 2 August 1993, 30; *Washington Post*, 23 July 1993.

[57] *New York Times*, 23 July 1993.

preserve slavery in the 1860s and the one which fought to preserve racial inequalities in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. As such, their concerns cannot be as easily worn down as were the attitudes expressed a century ago by the nationalistic patriots of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). In the 1890s the majority of white Southerners were loyal Americans whose use of Confederate symbolism reflected sectional pride and allegiance to the past, and not rebellion as the GAR feared. In contrast, there can be little doubt that, although the average Confederate soldier was not a slave-owner, the South fought the Civil War at least partly in order to protect and preserve the institution of slavery. There is also no doubt that the actions of the Dixiecrats, the Citizens' Councils, and the Ku Klux Klan both took Confederate emblems for symbols, and fought to protect the Southern, and racist, way of life. The GAR's argument faded away because it was based on a false stereotype; the arguments of those who see the flag as a racist symbol cannot be dismissed so easily.

The racist argument against Confederate emblems also offeres a more fundamental challenge to past views. Since the 1890s, white Americans of the South and North, in the name of reconciliation, gradually downplayed many of the controversial racial issues relating to the Civil War and its aftermath. The benefit of the war was increasingly seen as being the unity which followed it, and the daring experience it provided. This attitude was followed in the 1930s with the nation-wide proliferation of the romantic view of the antebellum South, a view which further submerged the problems leading to and arising from the war beneath a bog of sentiment and myth. The black American, both as slave before the war and freeman after, was banished to the margins of America, both in history and society. The argument which sees the flag as racist,

however, attacks this view by using a historical base upon which to build its conclusions—conclusions that, while relatively new, are difficult to refute. This school gives voice to the social and historical concerns black Americans have with the issue—an often ignored point, even today.

These attacks on Confederate symbols have not occurred without an opposing response. Within the past few years, the popularity of groups concerned with protecting flags, monuments, and other visible reminders of the South's Confederate heritage has increased dramatically, spurred on, most likely, by the attacks these symbols face. Some of these groups are established associations, such as the UDC and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, while others are entirely new creations. Often, these groups have different foci. The Heritage Preservation Association, for instance, is single minded in its protection of Confederate symbols, while the Southern League is involved in such issues as a sideline from its political, pro-Southern platform. Nonetheless, all of them share common attitudes towards the Confederacy and its symbols.

These groups tend to combine the attitudes of several past organizations and movements. Their view on the Confederacy largely echoes the beliefs first put forth by the Lost Cause writers of the 1870s. To them, secession was constitutionally justified, the Confederacy carried with it the spirit of the Revolutionary War, and the Civil War was "the high point of Southern identity and pride."[58] These groups also draw on the opinions begun by the "Southern renaissance" of the 1930s, which saw the Confederacy as the best expression of the South and the contemporary Southerner as the direct heir to this

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[58] Northeast Georgians for the Flag and Southern Heritage, "The Georgia Flag: Issues and Answers," (n.p., n.d.).

heritage. Thus, they have no qualms about displaying the flag at any occasion, a trait which sets them apart from the boosters of the Confederate memory of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[59] This tie between past and present can also be seen in the increasingly popular pastime of re-enacting Civil War battles.[60]

As can be expected, these groups are utterly opposed to the viewpoint of those who see Confederate symbols as inherently racist. They insist that the Confederacy fought the Civil War "for independence and liberty,"[61] and not for reasons involving slavery. They also find it hypocritical that the Confederate flag is considered a symbol of slavery when it flew over the institution for only four years, while the Stars and Stripes flew over a slavery-practicing United States for nearly a century.[62] Supporters of the flag also criticize those who say that its use by racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan has besmirched its image. They counter by saying that the flag "belongs to anyone who loves and admires it" and that groups like the KKK "have the First Amendment right to display whatever symbols they desire,"[63] although most of the flag supporters go out of their way to disassociate themselves from racist organizations. It is also pointed out that the KKK

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[59] Many groups encourage the flying of Confederate flags, especially the third national flag, because, as the Southern League says, "it is our only real national flag." John P. George, "Overcoming the 'Sour Grapes' Version of Southern History," *Southern Patriot* 2 (March-April 1995).

[60] This hobby was inspired by the re-enactments held during the Revolutionary War bicentennial, and has, like the membership of pro-Southern groups, blossomed in the past five years. See John Skow, "Bang, Bang! You're History, Buddy," *Time*, 11 August 1986, 58-9.

[61] Northeast Georgians, "The Georgia Flag"; Lunsford, *The Story of the Georgia Flag*.

[62] Gary B. Mills, "Dispelling Southern Myths: The Flag," *Southern Patriot* 1 (November-December 1994); Lunsford, *The Story of the Georgia Flag*.

[63] Northeast Georgians, "The Georgia Flag."

has used the Stars and Stripes and the Christian cross, with no apparent detriment to those symbols.

What many of these pro-Southern organizations are attempting to do is remake the Confederate flag by amalgamating select views of several generations of white Southerners. They see the flag as a direct historical symbol of the Confederacy, as did the veterans and celebrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as a political symbol of Southern pride, as many have since the 1940s. The significant element which has been removed, however, is racism. Unlike the flag-wavers of the 1890s, and the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, many of the people who rally around the flag today disavow racist thought and connections to racist groups.[64] But despite their disclaimers, these groups, sometimes by the very nature of their arguments, attempt yet again to reduce American blacks to insignificance by belittling their concerns, their place in society, and, unless token arguments are used in support of the pro-flag position, their place in history.[65] Sometimes the position is subtle, such as when the Southern League describes the South as a "predominantly Anglo-Celtic civilization."[66] Many times, these groups ignore protests against Confederate symbols made before the 1980s, preferring instead to characterize the current backlash as the sole creation of the NAACP. The Southern

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[64] Many groups openly decry the use of Confederate symbols by racists and do not permit their societies to be a sounding board for racist ideas.

[65] For instance, in their pamphlet, the group Northeast Georgians for the Flag and Southern Heritage makes much of the fact that some blacks were recruited into the Confederate army and that many served as cooks, musicians and servants. This is supposed to be evidence that blacks should feel a sense of allegiance to the Confederate flag. Northeast Georgians, "The Georgia Flag."

[66] "The Southern League Position" [document on-line]; available from http://www.dixienet.org/slhomepg/slpositn.html; Internet; accessed 6 August 1996.

League position, though perhaps more extreme than some, is largely representative of this view:

> A black leadership that cannot deal with the real crises plaguing its constituency loudly waves the red flag to boost membership, raise funds, and stay in power. The highly paid, elitist bureaucracy of the NAACP is a case at point. Fighting the Southern flag in South Carolina is far more profitable than attacking crime, poverty, and racism in Northern cities, where moneyed supporters of African-American organizations don't like to be reminded of the sins on their own doorsteps.[67]

In much the same way as during Reconstruction and during the post-war Civil Rights crises, American blacks are not seen as citizens with ideas of their own, but as pawns under the unhealthy influence of "leftists," "socialists," "elites," and "intellectuals."

The school of thought which sees Confederate symbols as racist is not a new one. Indeed, such arguments against Confederate flags have been appearing, in varying degrees of popularity, even before the flags were first taken up by politicians and the general public in the late 1940s. In the 1960s and 70s, the debate changed into action as the use of Confederate symbols by desegregated schools and universities was challenged throughout the South. This debate expanded even further in the 1980s and 90s, encompassing the official use of Confederate symbols by state governments themselves, a controversy which has yet to ebb. Indeed, with the growth of pro-Southern organizations, it looks as if the debate will intensify. The debate is significant in that it has altered how Americans view Confederate symbols. The racist argument and the backlash to it

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[67] Mills, "Dispelling Southern Myths,"; *Larry King Live*, March 1993, videocassette. The latter reference is to a television debate between Charles Lunsford and Zell Miller. The pamphlet of the Northeast Georgians mentions the NAACP, and the contemporary opponents of the Georgia state flag, but no other dissenters.

reversed the trend towards the abandonment of the historical authenticity of Confederate symbols, a process begun in the 1930s and furthered during the flag craze of the 1950s and the flag's subsequent popularization. The racist argument has since helped to remind white Americans of some of the issues surrounding the war and the later fight against desegregation from the perspective of black Americans, while the defense of Confederate flags has revitalized the work begun by the Lost Cause apologists. A sense of history, albeit a fractured one, has returned to the popular view of the Confederacy and its symbols. Not long ago, it may have been accurate to say that contemporary use of the Confederate flag is the legacy "not of General Lee and the Confederate Army of '61, but of Governor Wright and the collegiate pranksters of '47."[68] Today, the legacy of debate encompasses not only '61 and '47, but the years between and following as well.

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[68] Springer, "The Troubled Resurgence of the Confederate Flag," 9.

Conclusion:

My Symbol, Right or Wrong

Confederate flags present a great example of how historical symbols can be viewed in different ways, by different people, in different times. From the end of the Civil War until the late 1870s, the flags were viewed as symbols of a dead cause, and were rarely seen. This view began to subside in the 1870s, due to the influence of the "Lost Cause" writers and the first generation of veterans' and historical associations. As the Civil War changed in the eyes of white Southerners from a shameful defeat to a proud moment of bravery, the flags began to reappear. This trend was furthered in the late 1870s and early 1880s with the beginnings of economic renewal in the South, and by the retreat of the North from the South's affairs, including those of race. By the late 1880s, Confederate memorial events had given way to Confederate celebrations. The living veterans and the unfurled banners, staple components of those celebrations, were seen as living reminders of the white South's proud Confederate heritage.

This new use of Confederate emblems was not without opponents. In the 1890s, the use of Confederate flags by Confederate veterans' associations raised the ire of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), the Union veterans' association. The GAR, one of the most powerful contemporary patriotic groups in the United States, saw the open display of Confederate flags as tantamount to treason, and a reason to question the loyalty of the South—the GAR even went so far as to support a federal bill which would have banned the display of Confederate flags altogether. White Southerners were quick to

defend their banners as emblems solely of sectional pride, and not of disrespect to the United States. Nonetheless, they refused to lower the flags, and, as the GAR refused to appear at events which featured Confederate flags, the slow process of reconciliation between the sections was delayed even longer. It was not until the turn of the century, when Southern participation in the Spanish-American War began to convince the North of the South's loyalty, that the sections truly began to come together. Confederate flags, nationwide, lost the stigma of treason the North had attached to them, and came to be seen as another proud symbol of America's past.

In the 1930s, a rise in interest in the Civil War, as well as a "renaissance" in Southern letters, laid the groundwork for another change in the symbolism of Confederate flags. Until the 1940s flags were rarely an everyday sight, and were usually only brought out for events dealing with the Confederate memory, such as observances, dedications, or veterans' reunions. In the 1940s, however, flags began turning up in unusual places, such as on board aircraft carriers during World War II, in the stands at football games involving Southern universities, and in politics in the hands of the rabidly pro-Southern supporters of the "Dixiecrats." Gradually, the flag ceased to be solely a historical symbol, and became a symbol of the contemporary South as well. By the early 1950s, the flag lost still more of its historical background when it took on new symbolism as a generic symbol of American popular culture, and as a symbol of "rebellion," taken up by various disaffected groups—views which continue to this day.

The view which sees the Confederate flag as a symbol of racism goes at least as far back as the 1950s, and has witnessed increases in force in the late 1960s and the late 1980s. Supporters of this school draw their arguments from both the past and the present.

They point out the association the Confederacy had with slavery, as well as the later association of the flag with groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, as proof of the flag's racist nature. Of all the views opposing Confederate emblems, this is the one which has been the most determined. Since the late 1960s, universities, colleges, public schools, National Guard units, and, lately, the emblems of certain Southern states themselves, have witnessed campaigns aimed at the removal of their associated Confederate emblems. These campaigns have not occurred without a response. The 1990s have seen a resurgence in Southern historical societies aimed at the encouragement of Southern history, the bolstering of Southern sectional pride, and the protection of Confederate emblems. This debate has, as an interesting side-effect, returned historical considerations to the popular view of Confederate flags. It is perhaps due to these considerations, and the weight they have lent both sides, that the debate shows no signs of resolution.

The flag debate is thus a quarrel over how forgiving the eyes of history should be. Is it reasonable to take the position of "my country, right or wrong" and revere certain symbols of the past without concern as to their impact, simply because these symbols represent our ancestors? This question inevitably leads to concern whether the flag was "right" or "wrong" in the first place. When it comes to the vagaries of symbol, such absolutes are hard to assign—it might even be said, ideally, that any piece of symbolism, so long as there is a clear connection between the symbol and what it is supposed to represent, is "correct," even if only one person actually makes the connection. When historical symbols such as the Confederate flag are under consideration, however, certain analyses can be made in order to better judge the claims of each group.

Contemporary flag defenders essentially combine several generations' worth of Confederate symbolic reference. Like those of the Lost Cause generation and their followers, they are often concerned with the place of the South in the nation. They are proud of the Confederacy, and the role its defenders played in the Civil War, and are convinced that the act of Southern secession was constitutionally justified. Like their predecessors of the 1890s and later, they see the flag as a symbol of the South's soldiers, and emblematic of their sacrifice. And like their compatriots of the 1940s, they view the flag as the most important of all Southern symbols and have no compunction about using it as an emblem of Southern society. Although many historians might take issue with the flag defenders' views of the causes of the Civil War, much of the defenders' positions on the nature of the flag as a symbol should be non-controversial. The Confederate flags, especially the battle flag pattern which has become the dominant form, certainly can represent the pride of the South. The Confederate flag was the flag which Confederate soldiers, the ancestors of many of the flag's defenders, carried into battle. If Americans in general can look upon the actions of individual Southern soldiers and admire their brave conduct—as they should—then there can be no reason why the Confederate flag, as a purely historical, military emblem, should bear the brunt of scorn directed against the Confederacy and those later miscreants who have misused the symbol. Anti-flag activists, in their zeal, are often quick to forget the dedication many on the other side of the argument have to the honor of their ancestors and their cause.

But this view begs a question: is it possible to view the Confederate flag solely as an emblem out of military history, especially given its social uses, past and present? Based on the objections presented by those supporting the flag-as-racist-symbol

argument, the answer would have to be in the negative. Despite what the flag defenders claim, the flags of the Confederacy have been bound to racial questions since their inception. The Confederate States seceded and fought the Civil War with the aim of protecting its institution of slavery. The celebrants of the Confederate memory of the 1880s and 1890s were the same white Southerners who celebrated the abortive end of Reconstruction and who supported the beginning of Jim Crow—for example, at the same time the Mississippi state flag was being changed to incorporate the Confederate Battle Flag, the state of Mississippi was steadily disenfranchising its black voters. The twentieth century reunion of North and South which eased the controversy over Confederate emblems and allowed them to be seen as proud symbols of American history in general came at the expense of the American black, who was further relegated to the shadows, both in history and in society. In the 1940s the flag first became directly associated with contemporary racist, sectional politics—a role it filled throughout the 1950s and 1960s and, in the hands of extremist white supremacist groups, fills to the present day. Finally, despite their decided disavowal of these racist organizations and their beliefs, contemporary flag defenders still refuse to acknowledge the concerns of blacks. One of the arguments flag defenders, as well as defenders of the Confederacy in general, like to use is that it is wrong to judge things outside of their time—thus, it is wrong to damn the Confederacy for racism because in the 1860s racism was pervasive in the Union as well. By attempting to separate the flag from its stigma of racism, however, the defenders are doing the same thing they decry, as they are perhaps the only white Southerners in history who have viewed Confederate flags without racist connotations. So long as they refuse to relegate the flag to use only as a historical emblem, and instead parade it as a social

emblem as well, they should not be surprised when their opponents point out exactly what kind of society it represents.

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